

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
22 MAY 2023**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M BROOKES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A M Hall (Vice-Chairman), T R Ashton, K J Clarke, T J G Dyer, R A Gibson, Mrs S Rawlins, E W Strengiel, Mrs C L E Vernon, R A Wright and A N Stokes

Councillor R Butroid attended the meeting as an observer

Councillors R Davies and C Perraton-Williams attended the meeting remotely as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Ashley Behan (Street Works and Permitting Manager), Helen Reek (Support Services Manager), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Mandi Robinson (Network Regulation Compliance Manager), Mick Phoenix (Traffic Manager, Nathan Whitfield, Principal Engineer – Drainage), Sam Edwards (Head of Highways Infrastructure & Laboratory Services) and Thomas Crofts (Democratic Services Officer)

Officers in attendance remotely:-

Karen Cassar (Assistant Director Highways) and Nicole Hilton (Assistant Director - Communities)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

There were no apologies for absence received.

2 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 APRIL 2023

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS

There were no announcements made.

5 LEVELLING UP FUND - A16 CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS - SPRINGFIELDS AND GREENCELL ROUNDABOUTS

Consideration was given to a report from Sam Edwards, Head of Highways Infrastructure & Laboratory Services, on the proposed A16/A151 Springfields Roundabout and A16/B1180 Greencell improvements schemes. The following matters were reported:

- Construction works for the A16/A151 Springfields roundabout was due to commence from October 2023 to October 2024 and the A16/B1180 Greencell roundabout was due to commence from July 2024 to March 2025.
- The schemes featured a three-month cross over period; however, the later project was not due to impact traffic management during this period, as works were to start away from the existing highway.
- The traffic management for both projects was intended to complement each other rather than conflict to ensure there was no greater impact – with the use of lane closures and works taking place away from the current infrastructure. The use of temporary traffic lights was not anticipated; however, some traffic restrictions may be needed at certain points in construction, but these were to be in place only at night. Lessons had been learnt from previous works and varying road users and communities had been consulted.
- The total secured funding was £19,558,800 which had been match funded by the Council to a value of £2,173,200. Of the total funding, £15,500,000 had been allocated to the two projects in question.
- Attention was drawn to forecast cost estimates within the report, which demonstrated the associated risk and contingency budgets. Estimates had been calculated in partnership with the contractor and represented real costs.
- Attention was drawn to a letter that had been submitted by Pedals – Spalding's Cycle Action Group, which outlined their support for the inclusion of a cycle and pedestrian bridge alongside the A151 Springfields Roundabout or a permanent signalised pedestrian crossing. Officers stated that a bridge had been considered but that extreme engineering and land purchase cost were associated with undertaking the works. Also, if these works were included, the project bid would have exceeded the parameters of the funding stipulations. However, the project did not preclude the addition of constructing a bridge in the future. A signalised crossing was also considered, but the goals of the funding bid were weighted in favour of improving traffic flow, which such a crossing would stifle.
- It was clarified that existing crossings were being improved, with the inclusion of better signage and tactile paving. The projects were subject to numerous safety audits and would ensure any dangers posed to pedestrians and cyclists.

For clarity, the Chairman read out the letter from Pedals – Spalding's Cycle Action Group.

During consideration of the presentation, the Committee raised the following comments:

- Members enquired whether a subway was considered as an alternative option. Officers explained that a subway was far costlier to build and maintain and that it bore the peril of attracting anti-social behaviour. Officers concurred that if a crossing was to be provided at this location in the future, then a foot/cycle bridge was likely the optimum solution from a design, cost, and maintenance perspective.
- Members emphasised on the importance of considering options to deliver a crossing facility of some form to deter younger persons from crossing the road, to increase the safety of cyclists and pedestrians and to decrease the risk levels of a serious accident occurring. Officers highlighted that further interventions could be considered going forwards outside of this funding process. Members were satisfied and in agreement with assurances given.

RESOLVED

1. That the following matters in relation to the proposed scheme be noted:
 - a. safety audit progression
 - b. improved crossing points
 - c. that a cycle and footway bridge can be added at a later date if a need was proven
2. That the Committee support the report and comments from the discussion be shared with the Executive for consideration ahead of a decision on 6 June 2023.

6 HIGHWAYS - GULLY CLEANSING/REPAIR AND SURFACE WATER FLOODING - UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from Nathan Whitfield, Principal Engineer – Drainage, on gully cleaning and repair and surface level flooding. The report was presented in detail. It was also reported that the longer gully cleansing teams were unable to access a gully due to parked vehicles, the greater risk it presented in terms of flooding and management of highways assets.

During consideration of the presentation, the Committee raised the following comments:

- Gullies on rural roads accumulated debris from agricultural vehicles. Data driven targeted cleansing was now underway and was addressing this type of issue by ensuring more frequent cleansing of problem areas.
- On street parking was hindering complete gully cleansing, especially in residential urban areas. Signage was being placed at either end of the road to alert residents of planned cleansing activity, as well as social media posts. Letterbox drop awareness

campaigns had been explored but had proven inefficient. Members felt that cleansing activity needed to be shared with them to promote within their division.

- Some drainage assets were missing from the Council's records. These were mainly complex ancillary assets which required professional knowledge to identify and were easily missed when ownership was transferred. Some gullies had also been missed due to verge creep, which obscured the asset, and some were not considered formal drainage assets. Overall, the Council's data capture regarding drainage assets was very good compared against the national situation and had won awards.
- Greater detail, including the date of the next scheduled cleansing, needed to be given in responses to blocked gullies on FixMyStreet so that residents were fully informed when raising issues. Plans were in place to ensure greater detail in these responses.
- Ensuring a fixed date for cleansing activity was challenging, especially in urban areas, as multiple streets were cleansed at a given time. Some street cleansing required traffic management, which made fixed dates more feasible in these instances.
- Gully cleansing could not be conducted instantly after an issue was reported; however, reports were factored into cleansing programmes.

RESOLVED

1. That the following matters in relation to the update be noted:
 - a. There was a need to move towards more precise dates for when cleansing activity was undertaken
 - b. FixMyStreet needed to give more detailed responses to issues
2. That the Committee be satisfied with activity undertaken within this programme year and that comments made in relation to the updates be taken under consideration by the relevant Officers and the Executive Portfolio Holder.

7 HIGHWAYS PERFORMANCE REPORT, YEAR 6 (1 APRIL 2022 TO 31 MARCH 2023)

Consideration was given to a report from Mandi Robinson, Network Regulation Compliance Manager, and Mick Phoenix, Traffic Manager, on the Council's Permit Scheme – October 2016. The following matters were highlighted:

- At the start of the scheme in 2016, there had been 40,000 permitted applications per year – six years later, 65,000 applications were being processed and there was no sign that this trend was due to slow.
- Throughout the six years of the scheme, the same level of resources had been allocated to the work – with improved technology and reassessments of working practices helping to make the workload more efficient.
- Remedial works had increased over the years due to a growing need to sustain Council assets.
- There had been an increase in the number of fixed penalty notices issued to works in breach. Efforts to refocus identification and reporting mechanisms had led to an 85% increase in efficiency regarding the issuing of fines.

- The team were working hard to help educate contractors on expectations to help stop breaches associated with works and reduce the need for fines.

During consideration of the presentation, the Committee raised the following comments:

- Compared to other authorities, nationally, the broadband fibre upgrade works had been managed well by the Council – with incorrect use of materials being identified and removed at the cost of the contractor.
- A key issue facing fibre companies was their high turnover of staff and the resulting low awareness of legislative requirements when carrying out works.
- The Council was continuing to issue fines for breaches and was engaging with fibre companies to educate and identify lessons learnt.
- The Council did not have powers to terminate works that were in breach of legislation; however, the Council's expectations and legislative requirements were being made clear to fibre companies undertaking new works.
- Anglian Water had incurred the most fines, in part, due to the fact that they were the largest works promoter in the county. This situation was anticipated to improve following the Council's push towards greater collaborative working.
- Fines issued by the Council to the Council were 'wooden dollars' designed to measure performance and did not have a punitive bearing.
- Fibre company works gangs had to have an accredited supervisor and operator on site at all times. The Council was conducting random checks to ensure compliance.

RESOLVED

1. That the report be noted and endorsed for publication on the County Council's website.
2. That the Committee be satisfied by the performance achieved and activity undertaken within this programme year and that comments made in relation to the updates be taken under consideration by the relevant Officers and the Executive Portfolio Holder.

8 STREET WORKS - COLLABORATION CHARTER

Consideration was given to a report from Mick Phoenix, Traffic Manager – Place, and Ashley Behan, Street Works and Permitting Manager, on the new Street Works – Collaboration Charter. The following matters were highlighted from the report:

- Joint working was underway with fibre companies – with a need to improve the situation agreed by all partners.
- The Charter set out to bolster legislative requirements for street works with commitments to joint working and best practice guidance.
- Operational commitment had been obtained from Anglian Water, and the Charter was awaiting signoff by senior officials.

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- Other utility companies had been included in dialogues regarding the Charter, including City Fibre. More partners were anticipated to sign up in the coming months.

During consideration of the presentation, the following comments were raised:

- It was understood that some disruption had been caused by Spring Fibre's works. It was clarified that they were to be approached in relation to signing the Collaboration Charter.
- Greater effort was required to make residents aware of works that were due to commence on their street, especially concerning urban residential areas.
- It was hoped that following Anglian Water's agreement to the Collaboration Charter there would be a fall in the number of fines that had to be issued.

RESOLVED

1. That the report and Charter be noted and endorsed
2. That Officers take the Charter forward with utility companies and seek commitment from them to sign up.

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Consideration was given to a report by Kiara Chatziioannou, Scrutiny Officer, which invited the Committee to consider and comment on the content of its own work programme for the year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it can be of greatest benefit.

It was reported that there had been no changes to the Work Program since the publication of the agenda. An item/update on the gully cleansing activities, as requested by Members during the consideration of item 6 was added to the list of 'items to be programmed'.

RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be agreed subject to inclusion of a further update on the gully cleansing activities.

The meeting closed at 11.48 am