

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE  
17 JULY 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, A N Stokes, Mrs C L E Vernon, R A Wright and P Ashleigh-Morris

Councillors: R G Davies and C L Perraton-Williams attended the meeting remotely as observers via Teams

Officers in attendance:-

Jonathan Evans (Head of Highways, Client, and Contract Management), Kiara Chatziioannou (Scrutiny Officer), Richard Fenwick (Head of Highways Asset and Local Management Services), Sam Edwards (Head of Highways Infrastructure and Laboratory Services) and Thomas Crofts (Democratic Services Officer)

Officers in attendance remotely via Teams:-

Karan Cassar (Assistant Director Highways), Stuart Eccles (Network Design Manager) and Verity Druce (Head of Transport Services)

**10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E W Strenziel.

It was reported that, under Regulation 13 of the Local Government Committee and Political Groups Regulation 1990, Councillor P Ashleigh-Morris was replacing Councillor E W Strenziel for this meeting only.

**11 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No interests were declared at this point in proceedings.

**12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 MAY 2023**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to amending typographical errors.

**13 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS AND LEAD OFFICERS**

The Chairman thanked Highways Officers for their support in dealing with queries raised at the Lincolnshire Show in June, and noted that the queries largely concerned the condition and maintenance of roads, cycleways and paths.

14 WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2023

Consideration was given to a report from Jonathan Evans, Head of Highways, Client, and Contract Management. The following matters were highlighted:

- A minimum of 25,000 tonnes of salt was in stock at the start of the winter season, with a minimum of 15,000 tonnes available at any time throughout the season.
- The proposed Winter Service Plan had been reviewed and there were no policy or operational changes recommended for 2023.
- Budget developments were outlined, and it was reported that the service continued to implement value for money improvements.
- To ensure that the Winter service remained fit for purpose a project to optimise the precautionary salting routes was commenced in January 2023. The project looked to assess the current routes that were in place and test them with the latest constraints.

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

- Members commended Officers for a very comprehensive and detailed report.
- The lifespan of gritters was discussed in correlation to the cost for replacing these when they reached their end of life and also in relation to LCC remaining aligned to the strategic goals of reaching intended Net Zero goals. Members enquired whether there were plans to replace these with non-diesel fuelled gritters and requested clarification on when the strategic decision was to be made about replacement. Assurances were given that heavy goods vehicles were used sensibly and put on rotation around the country in an attempt to maintain these in good condition and expand their life span where possible. Decisions on the procurement of electric or hydrogen fuelled gritters would be considered when gritters cease to be fit for purpose, which, given the size of the fleet, would be approximately 5-7 vehicles of the 47 every year. This will also be in line with the technologies available and the decisions would be taken through this Committee for its views as required.
- A point raised regarding the investigation of the current gritted network in terms of identifying whether there were roads outside the policy scope or where there were new roads that met the policy standards and therefore should be included in the network. Officers gave assurance that Highways Service was keen to work with Councillors in identifying these and explained that the current plan offered opportunity to optimise the precautionary salting routes, which has the potential to increase efficiency and allow budgetary savings or the service could deliver more routes with the resource it holds. The service committed to reviewing the existing routes and maintaining dialogue with any councillors that are potentially impacted by the review.

## RESOLVED

1. That the Committee support the recommendations to the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT as set out in the report.
2. That comments made be shared with the Executive Councillor in relation to this item.

15 HIGHWAYS PERFORMANCE REPORT, QUARTER 4 (1 JANUARY TO 31 MARCH 2023)

Consideration was given to a report from Jonathan Evans, Head of Highways, Client and Contract Management. The report gave an update on all aspects of the highways service delivery, the quarterly performance data for the key contracts (Highways Works, Traffic Signals and Professional Services), and strategic highlights relevant to the Highways Service in Lincolnshire. The following matters were addressed concerning quarter 4 of 2022/23: highways performance of year 3, highways complaints, and Corporate Plan performance indicators regarding the condition of roads.

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

- Cyclical cleansing was reviewed based on reports and alerts raised with the Council; however, instances where reactive jetting took place were not factored and did not affect planned cleansing cycles.
- PI7 had performed below target and had been identified as the consequence of an oversight following the retirement of a member of staff. The issue had been recognised and greater oversight had been restored regarding this indicator.
- It was understood that numerous complaints concerned the same matter and that all 132 complaints received did not amount to 132 issues.
- It was clarified that customer complaints were handled and reported separately from fault reports.

The Committee felt that reporting of repeat complaints concerning the same issue needed to be rationalised and reporting needed to convey how many separate issues had been raised via the complaints process.

## RESOLVED

That the report be endorsed and that the Committee's satisfaction on activity undertaken within this programme year be recorded; and that comments and suggestions captured be shared with the Executive Member for Highways, Transport, and IT and relevant officers.

16 HIGHWAYS MAJOR PROJECT UPDATE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report from Sam Edwards, Head of Highways Infrastructure and Laboratory Services. The following matters were highlighted:

- This was new separate report that used to feature as part of the overall Highways Performance Report. It was felt that as there were numerous queries relating to the major project programme it was advantageous to have a separate report.
- Updates were given on the following live projects:
  - Grantham Southern Relief Road – Beam pushing was determined to be the best solution in achieving piling and embankment stability in order to overcome the recently identified poor ground conditions.
  - North Hykeham Relief Road – A key decision report was due to be presented to the Committee in September 2023 before a decision by the Executive in October 2023. Consultations had been completed in June 2023, with feedback being generally positive – concerns raised largely relate to ensuring pedestrian crossings and maintaining adequate traffic flow during the works. Geological surveys and ground surveys had been completed and a preliminary design had been finalised. Pennels roundabout was also due to receive investment to resolve issues concerning resizing for traffic flow and improved safety. Works were due to start at the end of 2023, with a 3-year build period.
  - Spalding Relief Road – Adverse ground conditions meant that significant ground works were required.
- The Levelling Up Fund was being used to develop Boston, Marsh Lane and Spalding and their associated active travel projects. All spending was due to be completed by March 2025.
- Dolphin Lane, a joint funded project between the Council and Boston Borough Council was underway, with funding originating from the District's Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Committee was advised that major schemes take a long time to complete and that there would therefore only be a few updates each time this report came to committee, going forward.

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

- The Council was already drawing down from the £110 million of grant monies and was in a good position to secure the funding with legal matters and the business case being finalised.
- It was confidently forecast that pricing for the Grantham Relief Road was at £150 million.
- Additional options were to be explored for the Grantham Relief Road and Skegness Relief Road if further funding could be secured. It was clarified that both schemes could not be undertaken simultaneously due to capital expense and cash flow matters.
- No legal process had been initiated regarding the additional expenses incurred by the alterations to the Grantham Relief Road works. A legal case may be pursued following finalisation of the redesign, if viable.
- Active travel plans for Boston included the Marsh lane scheme, which linked the eastern and western parts of the town via an active travel route.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the report and comments made be shared with the Executive Member for Highways, Transport, and IT.

17      PUBLIC TRANSPORT ANNUAL UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from Verity Druce, Head of Transport Services. The following matters were highlighted:

- An enhanced partnership plan and scheme was made on 1 April 2023, and was a legal arrangement between the Local Transport Authority (LTA) and bus operators and set out the obligations in order to advance bus services in the county. The main focus of the partnership was to advance the sustainability of the service.
- Lincolnshire had received £2.1m bus service improvement plan (BSIP+) funding for the financial year 2023/24. At the current time, the details and conditions of this funding were still being worked out. Engagement with bus operators was underway to scope schemes that could utilise this funding.
- Government statistics show that in 2021/22, bus journeys in Lincolnshire increased by 240%. The national picture saw passenger numbers improve on average by 194%, which demonstrated that passenger return in Lincolnshire was better than most regions.
- The Council's marketing and engagement campaign to encourage passengers to make greater use of public bus services was undertaken in September 2022.
- Callconnect saw excellent levels of passengers returning to the service in the last 12 months, with average weekly patronage levels at 98-99% of pre-covid levels.
- An app-based booking system was introduced as a trial on the Stamford area Callconnect services in September 2021, with a view to modernising the passenger experience. Full rollout of this service across anticipated to be completed by March 2024.
- The Council undertook an audit of bus stop infrastructure across the county in order to better understand the state of the assets and improve roadside information.
- Further funding parameters were to be explored as the service continued to develop.

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

- App-based booking for the Callconnect service was intended to supplement the existing service rather than replace it.
- It was clarified that the Council managed the booking of Callconnect services, not the operator.
- It was the Council's decision how the BSIP+ funding was allocated.

- The county's bus services were primarily determined by operators and run commercially, and the Council looked to support the network where it was able to do so.

The Committee agreed that better transport links needed to be established between the towns of Lincolnshire. However, it was noted that there was not enough funding available to establish all required links and that such routes were not necessarily commercially viable for operators.

#### RESOLVED

That the report be received, and that comments and suggestions made, be passed on to relevant Officers and the Executive Portfolio Holder.

#### 18 TRANSPORT QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23

Consideration was given to a report from Verity Druce, Head of Transport Services. The following matters were highlighted:

- The service had undergone a staff restructure and recruitment to vacant posts was underway. Agency staff had been employed to supplement the service at this time.
- The educational travel budget pressure remained high for 2023/24. A 3-year reprocurement plan for all contracts was already underway, alongside route optimisation to help address pressures.
- Greater focus on customer service was being developed – with staff customer care training and development was underway.
- A new management information dashboard had been created with support from corporate teams, in order to monitor, manage and better project educational travel measures. The initial dashboard was on target to be in place by the end of July 2023, following which a further phase of activity will develop management information in collaboration with Children's Services.
- A new travel options function was being established in order to enable and empower SEND pupils to use alternative travel arrangements to taxis, and to maximising opportunities for sustainable travel.

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

- Work was underway to identify how alternative fuel vehicles could be brought into the market. However, it was recognised that this would require significant capital expenditure in procuring new vehicles and establishing suitable infrastructure.
- The Department for Transport (DfT) had recently announced an additional £300 million to support bus services from July 2023 until April 2025. £150 million will be provided between July 2023-April 2024 and £150 million between April 2024-April 2025. The £300m will be allocated on the basis of £160 million for local transport authorities to improve fares, services and infrastructure, and £140 million going

directly to operators to help protect essential services. From the Council's perspective, this results in £2.1m of Bus Services Improvement Plan Plus Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) + funding for this financial year, from a total of £80m that was going directly to local transport authorities. For Lincolnshire's bus operators, this funding replaced Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding which ended on 30 June 2023 and the allocation was calculated based on fuel use and distance.

- It was felt that school organised services and commercial services sometimes duplicated service provision – this was being reviewed with both schools and operators.

#### RESOLVED

That the report be received and endorsed; and that comments and suggestions made, be passed on to relevant Officers and the Executive Portfolio Holder.

#### 19 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 clarified that work was underway to arrange a report from Network Rail to be presented to the Committee at a subsequent meeting and that the Grantham Future High Street Fund – Station Approach issue was not due for a decision in September 2023 and was included in the Forward Plan by mistake.

#### RESOLVED

That the work programme presented be agreed subject to the amendments above.

The meeting closed at 11.57 am