



HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 6 NOVEMBER 2017

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M BROOKES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors C J T H Brewis (Vice-Chairman), Mrs W Bowkett, Mrs J Brockway, M A Griggs, R Grocock, S P Roe, A N Stokes, E W Strengiel, C L Strange and R B Parker

Councillors: T R Ashton, R D Butroid, R G Davies and Mrs C L Perraton-Williams attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

Jonathan Evans (Senior Project Leader), Andy Gutherson (County Commissioner for Economy and Place), Paul Little (Network Manager North), Paul Rusted (Infrastructure Commissioner), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R A Renshaw.

The Chief Executive reported that, under Local Government (Committee and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Councillors Mrs W Bowkett and R B Parker had been appointed to the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillors B Adams and R A Renshaw until further notice.

30 DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

31 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 SEPTEMBER 2017

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2017 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

32 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR AND LEAD OFFICERS

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had asked each scrutiny committee to nominate a member to sit on the Brexit Working Group, and

with there being no other nominations it was agreed that Councillor M Brookes should be the representative for Highways and Transport.

The Chairman also advised that a Traffic Signals Team/Winter Maintenance briefing had been arranged for 20 November 2017, and the attendance of all members was encouraged.

The Executive Councillor for Highways and Transport reported on the current issues with the High Street railway crossing in Lincoln, and advised that the maintenance being carried out by Network Rail was not being assisted by the High Street Improvement Scheme. However, the Council was working hard with the contractors to ensure that the scheme was completed within the necessary timeframe.

In relation to the issues experienced with the proposed scheme at Gedney, following the public consultation there had been mixed views regarding the scheme, with local parishes being strongly against the scheme. Therefore, a decision had been taken to not pursue the scheme. It was planned to use the money for this scheme for improvements to Holdingham roundabout which should benefit the wider community.

The Executive Councillor expressed disappointment at members' attendance at divisional meetings, as only 16 members had attended (although it was acknowledged that there had been good attendance from members of this committee). It was requested that members of the Committee speak to their own groups about the importance of attending these meetings. Members agreed that they found these to be very useful meetings, particularly for sharing information. It was also commented that parish cluster meetings were working really well.

It was queried what the difference between one to one's and divisional meetings was as members did get a lot of benefit from the one to one's. Members were advised that one to one's were about discussing individual local issues, whereas the divisional group was about issues which would affect whole areas, such as updates on schemes as well as little bits of education, such as how the gritting would be carried out.

Some members commented that it was difficult to attend every meeting they were invited to, particularly as some worked during the day and it was queried whether some could be organised for the evening.

33 NETWORK RAIL ACCOUNT PLAN AND JOINT SCHEMES

Consideration was given to an item which provided the Committee with an update on the strategic direction for the development and delivery of schemes which interact with the railways infrastructure in Lincolnshire.

The Committee was advised that this was a strategic item and assurance was sought from Network Rail on the future progress of the schemes listed in the report.

A number of visitors from Network Rail were welcomed to the Committee:

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- Paul McKeown (Director of Route Sponsorship)
- Neil Henry (Head of Operations South)
- Joe Cookson (Public Affairs Manager)

The Committee was advised that Network Rail operated a very large network of track, as the County Council did with the highways network, so there was an opportunity for the two to interact on a regular basis. It was noted that this was the first time that the action plan had been presented in the format included in the report.

The representatives from Network Rail were provided with the opportunity to explain their roles and responsibilities as follows:

- Paul McKeown – advised members that Network Rail worked in conjunction with a number of train operating companies, both franchises and open access operators. He advised that he was responsible for the London North Eastern and East Midlands route, which was one of 8 subsidiaries and ran from London to the Scottish Borders, and including Lincoln. This represented about 20% of the UK's rail infrastructure. In his role, he represented clients who were carrying out works to this infrastructure, and this included the east coast programme where updates were being carried out to enable the route to increase its capacity.
- Neil Henry – Advised that he was responsible for the south end of the route, which was everything south of Doncaster, and all the operational staff linking into maintenance and the day to day organisation of these works, including working closely with the train operators. It was also noted he was also responsible for ensuring that the worked were carried out, not necessarily for planning the work.
- It was reported that there was now a formalised structured governance and interface with stakeholders in place, which had not existed previously.
- There were two main Network Rail projects which were relevant to Lincolnshire – the Lincoln Eastern Bypass and Lincoln High Street. It was reported that governance was in place for the Lincoln Eastern Bypass, and work had been underway for the 72 hour blockade of the railway line to allow the steel beams for the bridge to be hoisted into place. It was noted that this had been a major engineering operation which had been successfully delivered with only one minor problem. It was reported that work continued but this had been a key milestone. There were regular meetings with LCC on the progress of the project.
- In relation to the Lincoln High Street foot bridge, Network Rail apologised for the additional disruption but advised that this was due to the additional work which needed to be completed on the bridge and steps.

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

- In terms of joint schemes, it was queried whether there was any update in relation to the proposed two bridges for the western growth corridor. It was reported that Network Rail were aware of the project but it was not proposed

that they would be directly involved in the construction of the bridges. Network Rail's role would be to ensure that the proposed bridges were of a safe and efficient design. It was confirmed that these bridges, if they were built, would not be funded by Network Rail.

- It was noted that if schemes were developer led, they were not joint schemes in the context of the information presented in the report. However, it was also noted that if a project was not listed on the account plan in the report it did not mean that Network Rail were not aware of it.
- A query was raised in relation to the track from Barnetby to Grimsby as there were attempts to upgrade the rail traffic on this route, and assurance was sought that this stretch of track would be maintained and upgraded accordingly. Members were advised that this route was part of the East Midlands franchise, but from a Network Rail perspective, when a franchise was submitted, they were asked by the DfT to comment and evaluate and if there were likely to be significant impacts then they would require these to be addressed. Members were assured that the condition of the existing rail track would be maintained to current standards.
- In relation to the Brayford Bridge construction in Lincoln, it was noted that the planning application had been submitted to the City Council which had then been declined, and then an appeal had been submitted, and the outcome was awaited. Network Rail had chosen to continue with the commercial activity in the hope of a successful appeal to avoid any additional delay.
- Members commented that they welcomed this session with Network Rail and commented that they should be held regularly.
- It was commented that if the Joint Line was to be electrified to Doncaster, this would benefit authorities both north and south of Lincolnshire. Members were advised that suggestions such as these needed to be captured and included in the considerations for the east coast strategy.
- There was a need to identify the requirements over a 25-40 year time scale.
- There was a need to collectively focus on what the outcomes were that all stakeholders wanted to achieve.
- It was suggested that the Sleaford to Spalding line would have more benefit if it was a dual shift line rather than a one shift line.
- Members were advised that Network Rail worked through a commercial contract, and it was their responsibility to manage the programme of works. If there was to be a direct impact on train operations, then Network Rail would be responsible and would be contractually bound to pay compensation to the train operating companies, if they did not hand back the railway on time.
- The Chairman thanked Network Rail for the assurance that the repair work for the High Street bridge would be complete before the Christmas Market.

The Committee expressed its appreciation to the representatives from Network Rail for attending the meeting, and it was requested whether they would come back again the following year.

RESOLVED

1. That the comments made in relation to the work being undertaken as part of the Account Plan and Joint Schemes listed in Appendix A be noted; and
2. That assurance was sought on the future progress of the schemes listed.

34 LINCOLNSHIRE HIGHWAYS 2020 - OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Consideration was given to a report which asked the Committee to comment on the Lincolnshire Highways 2020 Business Case. It was reported that the current Lincolnshire Highways Alliance contracts were due to reach full term on the 31 March 2020 and could not be further extended under European Union Procurement Law. The report outlined the replacement options available to the Highway Service as well as a recommended future option which would be presented to the Executive on 5 December 2017.

Members received a presentation which provided further information in relation to the following areas:

- Current providers
- Positives and negatives of current model
- Options appraisal route map
- Options heat map
- Model description
- Assessment criteria
- Highways 2020 key dates.

The Committee was provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and presentation, and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- Members commented that the working group had been a very rigorous process and it had been positive to have member involvement as they had been able to contribute to the process.
- It was noted that 4 or 5 members would continue to be part of the project board and would be able to feed into the process.
- It was queried what the value of the contracts were and what sort of work would the authority be looking to the market to provide. It was noted that there was an aim to leave some flexibility in the contract to enable individual items of work up to £1million to be carried out. It was reported that the contract would be for at least 7 years (It would be a five year contract but an extension could be awarded after 3 years) as this would make any investments in machinery etc. viable. Members were advised that approximately £48million of works would be handled by the three contracts.
- It was thought that there would be 6/7 companies which would tender for the highways works term contract. The other two contracts were more complex as there were fewer companies in the market, and so it was expected that they would all tender.
- It was queried what the risks were in relation to this contract, and members were advised that there was a risk register for this project, and the risks would

largely remain the same as the current contract. It was noted that some of the existing partners had been through difficult financial times.

- It was acknowledged that there were a lot of individual risks.
- To get a functional relationship with the suppliers it was important that the right management was in place, and to ensure that it was understood who was going to turn up in Lincolnshire to deliver the contract. It was noted that there had been a continuity of management in this contract.
- It was queried whether charging for officer time at non-compulsory meetings on planning matters was an option, as it was a practice used by other authorities. It was noted that officer time was charged for in some cases, but the authority did not look to make a profit. There was a need for caution in this practice to ensure that it wasn't seen as a barrier. It was also noted that there was a difference in land values between Lincolnshire and some other counties which could justify costs charged in some areas.
- A member commented that they were pleased to see that the authority was not being complacent about being a band 3 authority, and had been grateful that it had been a thorough process.
- It was thought that to try and build on the existing model was a sensible thing to do when compared against the other options. The Chairman commented that he was happy to support option 17.

(Note: Councillor R B Parker abstained from voting)

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee support the recommendations to the Executive as set out in the report; and
2. That a member of the Labour Group be added to the Highways 2020 Project Board.

35 HIGHWAYS GRASS CUTTING ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report which updated members on the maintenance of highway grass within the public highway in Lincolnshire. It related to the policy covered in the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) and aimed to provide more detailed information on the delivery aspects of the service.

The Committee was guided through the report, with particular focus on the following areas:

- Previous regimes
- Funding
- Current arrangements
- Programme
- Parish agreements
- Verge biomass
- Protected verges

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Members 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 during discussion included the following:

- It was confirmed that the transition allocation had been moved into the base budget.
- It was queried whether the cuts in June and September were at the right time, and whether the June cut could be carried out a little earlier in the year. It was suggested that this could reduce the number of complaints.
- In relation to verge biomass, it was commented that the drainage boards had a lot of innovative equipment and it may be worthwhile speaking with them.
- It was confirmed that there would be two cuts per year.
- It was acknowledged that Lincoln City did carry out additional cuts to the county cuts, about 10 in total, as part of a larger contract (this included the 2 County cuts).
- There was support for the biomass project, and it was thought that residents would be pleased if the Council introduced this.
- It was reported that there was a small budget for additional cuts which were required to improve visibility at road junctions etc.
- Where verges had been damaged by vehicles cutting the grass, the authority could request the contractor put it right again.
- The cuts should start at the same time in the north and the south of the county.
- It was commented that for the first time 'verge creep' was being seen where plants from the verges were growing on the footpaths.
- It was noted that some criticism had been received from parish and town councils the previous year and after this meeting it was intended that officers would write to all parishes before the end of the following week as they were now getting to the time of year where precepts were being looked at. It was the intention to engage with as many of the parishes and town councils as possible to better understand local requirements.
- It was noted that if there were protected verges they would be left off the programme.
- It was commented that the timing of the cuts seemed to be abstract, and it was queried whether it would be better to cut at 25% and 75% through the year, so there was always 50% between cuts. Members were advised that many different cutting schedules had been considered, but the timing of cuts would still be looked at.
- It was commented that what the parishes wanted were accurate maps with boundaries clearly marked so they knew how much grass, in m², they would have to take on. If they were provided with this information it was suggested they may be more willing to take this role on.

RESOLVED

That the comments made in relation to the report be noted.

36 CONTROL OF WEEDS WITHIN THE HIGHWAY

Consideration was given to a report which updated members on the control of weeds within the public highway in Lincolnshire. It related to the policy covered in the Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP) and aimed to provide more detailed information on the delivery aspects of the service.

The Committee was guided through the report, with particular focus on the following sections:

- Noxious weeds
- Service level
- Funding 2017/18
- Service Delivery
- Chemical usage
- Protected verges

Members 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 during discussion included the following:

- Concerns were raised regarding the ongoing damage to the footpath and highway.
- It was commented that in 2012 the authority was looking at bringing in use of foam for weed control. It was reported that this had been tried, but it had not been very successful.
- It was suggested that saving money by reducing to one spray per year could be a false economy as the damage that weeds did to footways and roads could be serious and costly to repair.
- It was noted that this year would be the first year that only one spray had been carried out, and so there would be a need to monitor weed growth, as if weeds became established they could cause serious damage.
- Members commented that there was a lot of good will from local people to go out and get something done locally and it was reported that work was underway on self-help guidelines to cover the removal of weeds and grass cutting.
- South Kesteven District Council had just carried out a 'Big Clean' and a lot of the bigger weeds had been removed as part of this scheme by local people.
- It was suggested that it would be useful if all members knew what knotweed looked like.
- It was also commented that there were advantages to letting wild flowers grow.
- It was suggested that the Executive Councillor should seriously consider increasing the number of weed spraying treatments carried out per year.

RESOLVED

That the Committee unanimously supported that a request be made to the Executive/Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT for the current Highways weed spraying single-spray policy to be reviewed and consideration

given to increasing the number of treatments as part of the budget setting process for 2018/19.

37 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK
PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which enabled the Committee to 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.

Members were advised that the appointment for the Traffic Signals Briefing had gone out to all members, and that this would be taking place on Monday, 20 November 2017 at 10.00am at County Offices, Lincoln.

RESOLVED

That the work programme as set out in Appendix A to the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 4.35 pm

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