

**HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT
 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
 27 OCTOBER 2014**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR M BROOKES (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors A G Hagues (Vice-Chairman), M G Allan, D Brailsford, K J Clarke, R J Hunter-Clarke, J R Marriott, R A H McAuley, N M Murray, Mrs A M Newton and A H Turner MBE JP

Councillors: S F Kinch (Executive Support Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT, R A Renshaw and R G Fairman attended the meeting as observers

Officers in attendance:-

David Davies (Principal Maintenance Engineer), Andy Gutherson (County Commissioner for Economy and Place), Paul Rusted (Infrastructure Commissioner), Louise Tyers (Scrutiny Officer), Steve Willis (Chief Operating Officer), Richard Wills (Executive Director for Environment and Economy) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R G Davies, Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT.

28 DECLARATION OF COUNCILLORS' INTERESTS

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

29 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2014

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2014 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to it being clarified that a report on Network Rail's protocols for temporary closure of level crossings be brought to a future meeting.

30 NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMISSIONING AND DELIVERY

The Committee received a presentation from Richard Wills, Executive Director for Environment and Economy in relation to the new arrangements for Commissioning and deliver which provided further information in relation to the following areas:

- Senior Management Review – Drivers;
- Commissioning Council Principles;

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- Commissioning philosophy;
- Formal interface;
- Informal interface;
- Design principle;
- Richard Wills – Role;
- Not a "directorate" – 4 operating groups;
- Executive Director for Environment and Economy – Organisation of Senior Managers;
- Organisation of Senior Managers for Highways and IT;
- 3 Commissioning Strategies;
- Sustaining and developing prosperity through infrastructure (Various priorities);
- Sustaining and developing prosperity through infrastructure;
- Commissioning;
- Delivery – Highways;
- Committee's Role;
- Key contacts for Highways;
- Conclusions;
-and reality;

Members of the Committee 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:

- When referring to commissioning, it was important to note that this did not automatically mean outsourcing services. The authority was very much pro 'in house' services, but it was important to act in a way that provided the best value. One of the most effective delivery methods in Lincolnshire for Highways services has been through external contractors. A lot of work on benchmarking had been carried out to ensure that this remained true. It was also noted that other authorities, such as Leicestershire had been looking at the model used by Lincolnshire;
- The budget for footpaths and roads was currently up for discussion, and the Executive Councillor was working very hard to retain the budget, and was even asking for additional money for the capital budget and the maintenance budget;
- There was a need to try and maximise the amount of capital spending against match funding;
- 70% of Highways Officers' time was spent dealing with the operation of the roads as a network, and only 30% of the time maintaining it as an asset;
- One issue in terms of the reduction in staff numbers was resilience, and there would be a need for senior management to make a decision on whether to employ fewer specialists and more generalists;
- In the event of someone with specialist knowledge being off sick, there was the potential that there could not be cover in the short term, and any issues would need to be dealt with from existing resources;
- All contracts were set up so work was done correctly the first time, in the event that a material failed, but not substantially, then a reduction in costs would be

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agreed. If there was a major fail, then the contractors were required to correct it at their own expense. All sub-contractors were approved by the authority after checking their technical ability and financial stability;

- There were concerns regarding what the structure below the senior managers would look like. Members were advised that the Chief Operating Officer had met with the highways managers to discuss the changes to the divisions. It was reported that a degree of consistency would be established;
- It was queried whether officer time spent dealing with issues on behalf of the utility companies was recharged, or if not, would this be an option for the future?
- The Executive Councillor wanted there to be more focus on the road user as well as the maintenance of the roads as an asset, and for the roads to be thought of as a 'passenger transport system' rather than just an asset to be maintained;
- It was queried whether the commissioning structure would be successful in the long term, and the Executive Director advised that it was important to choose the right structure for the right time. The commissioning model would be fit for purpose for what the council was trying to achieve, and it would help to break down the silo's;

RESOLVED

That the presentation be noted.

31 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR FOR HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT & IT

The Executive Support Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT advised that he had no announcements to make at this time.

The Infrastructure Commissioner provided the Committee with updates on major highways schemes as follows:

Lincoln East – West Link - the contract had now been let, and pre-start meetings had been held and work was due to start on site on 3 November 2014.

Canwick Hill – the first tender was received on 24 October 2014, and it was hoped that a successful tender would be found from this process.

Lincoln Eastern Bypass – planning permission for a different Non-Motorised User (NMU) bridge had been received and the CPO and side roads orders had been republished. A six week consultation had now started. It had been suggested that previous objections and work carried out in relation to them on the previous public inquiry would be taken into account and considered dealt with. Concerns were expressed regarding the risk that, following the delays with this project, after the General Election in May 2015, the £50m promised from central government may not be available. It was also reported that there could be a planning application submitted for 400-500 houses on the land between the bypass and Cherry Willingham. It was suggested that it could be helpful for members if the County

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Commissioner for Economy and Place circulated a briefing note which explained some of the constraints and types of risk.

It was confirmed that the footbridge over the level crossing at the High Street in Lincoln would still be going ahead.

32 LINCOLNSHIRE HIGHWAYS ALLIANCE UPDATE REPORT - OCTOBER 2014

Consideration was given to a report which provided an update on progress with the Lincolnshire Highways Alliance, an alliance between the County Council, Imtech, Mouchel and Kier. This Alliance delivered the majority of highway services through the Traffic Signals Term Contract, the professional Services Contract and the Highway Works Term Contract.

It was reported that the Lincolnshire Highway Alliance was now in the fifth year of a potential contractual duration of 10 years. Independent comparison of services confirmed that the Alliance continued to deliver class leading, cost effective, high quality highway services with improvement areas identified and work underway to deliver that further efficiency and improvement.

The Infrastructure Commissioner guided the Committee through the report and Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report, and during consideration of the report, the following points were raised:

- It was evident in Boston, that the amount of positive publicity had deteriorated over the quarter;
- In terms of the professional services contract, it had reached a stage where it would be difficult to raise the performance significantly;
- It was queried whether the authority did any 'spot tendering' to check whether the contracts were providing value for money when compared with the current market. Members were advised that there were a number of framework contracts in place, but spot tendering would not be carried out for small works;
- The authority carried out a range of benchmarking activities against other midlands authorities, and so there was confidence that the Alliance was still providing value for money;
- Concerns had been raised previously regarding the quality of the weed control works, but it was thought that this year it had been slightly better;
- It was confirmed that local councils were able to take on some activities such as weed control;
- Complaints were being received regarding the surface dressing treatments which were being used, and it was queried whether it was the right specification as in some areas had increased the noise of the road. Members were advised that the material being used was of the correct technical specification and that there was currently no noise limit requirement. Noise level testing was being undertaken to define the current position and to consider a way forward.

RESOLVED

That comments made in relation to the report be noted.

33 SPALDING TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report which invited the Committee to consider the Spalding Transport Strategy 2014 – 2026 which was due to be considered by the Executive Councillor for Highways, Transport and IT.

The Committee was guided through the report, and the process, consultation, content, delivery and monitoring arrangements were explained. Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that this was the right time to be launching this Strategy and it would be beneficial to tie it in with the South east Lincolnshire Local Plan;
- It was queried whether this would be a suitable time to consider reviewing the Boston Transport Plan;
- Councillor Mrs Newton advised that she had attended the Spalding Town Forum meeting which had been held the previous week, and some of the main issues which had arisen was the wish to retain the Into Town bus service as part of the Strategy as it was well used, and would be important to fulfil the need to get more vehicles off the roads. Ideally residents would like to see another vehicle added to the service to increase frequency of journeys and encourage more people to use it. It was also thought that there was a need for Network Rail to reinstate the footbridge at Winsover Road as a priority to improve connectivity in the town and to encourage more people to walk or cycle;
- There was support for the suggestion of removing some of the town centre signal installations in order to improve traffic flow in the town;
- In relation to the additional vehicle for the Into Town bus service, it was noted that where new housing development was planned, this could create opportunities for more frequent bus services. However, it was noted that often it was more effective to have the services in place before people moved into the houses, as this encourages them to form new transport habits more easily;
- It was suggested that the wording regarding the potential for developer contribution to local bus services should be strengthened;
- As the Boston Relief Road and Grantham Relief Road were being paid for through CIL, would it be possible for development to the south east quadrant of greater Lincoln to be funded in the same way?
- The issues being faced by Spalding were similar to those in Sleaford;
- In order to have a sustainable transport system there would be a need for some degree of traffic restraint within the town centre;
- The aim of the Transport Strategy was to create a balance between providing safe facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and improving traffic flow;
- The biggest barrier to traffic flow on the A151 was the impact of the level crossings;

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- There was a need to be explicit regarding what the impacts on the different types of road users would be;
- Councillor R G Fairman, the County Councillor for Spalding East and Moulton was permitted to speak by the Chairman, as a local councillor. He raised concerns regarding the amount of planned development and the impact it could have on the County's farming economy;
- It was noted that one of the key aspects of a local plan was to facilitate the delivery of growth. An underlying requirement of this was the provision of housing units;
- With plans for 3000 houses to be built to the west of the level crossing, there was a need for plans to be in place to ensure that people could continue to cross the railway line. There was also a need for provision for pedestrians and cyclists to be safely away from motorists;
- Members supported and endorsed the Strategy, and commented that the Strategy was sensible and was not just focused on car users, but it also focused on people getting to work, whether on foot, by cycling or using the buses and trains;
- There was a need for clarity in these documents, in terms of the language used. Members were advised that this was an issue that the Executive Councillor raised on a regular basis;
- It was commented that the reaction to this Strategy had been favourable, and residents felt there had been a lot of consultation. Over 100 people attended one of the public consultation sessions, and residents felt they had had an opportunity to contribute to the Strategy.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee supports the recommendation that Executive Councillor endorses the Spalding Transport Strategy 2014-2036;
2. That the following additional comments be passed to the Executive Councillor:-
 - The important of retaining and possibly increasing the frequency of the Into Town bus service;
 - The need for a footbridge to be re-instated over the level crossing at Winsover Road as a priority.

34 HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report which enabled it to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year.

The Scrutiny Officer reported that the only change was the addition of the item in relation to the temporary closure of level crossings by Network Rail.

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It was also suggested that a standing item be added to the agenda to provide the Committee with an update on progress of the major highways schemes. It was agreed that this would be a verbal update.

RESOLVED

1. That the work programme be noted;
2. That a verbal update on the major highways schemes be added to future agendas.

The meeting closed at 12.45 pm