

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
HIGHWAYS FORUM FOR HARBOROUGH
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AT HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL ON TUESDAY
28TH FEBRUARY 2017 AT 4.30PM

PRESENT

County Councillors	District Councillors
Cllr G A Hart (Chairman)	Cllr C Holyoak
Cllr R K A Feltham	Cllr M Rickman
Cllr R Page	Cllr A Burrell
Cllr S Hill	Cllr N Hall
	Cllr A Nunn
	Cllr C Wood (substitute for Cllr Bilbie)

The following also attended the meeting:

County officers present: T Kirk, P Clarke and S Dann

District officers present: N Proudfoot

001. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members, officers and members of the public to the meeting. The Chairman informed Members that a policeman was due to attend for the petition presentation but has not yet arrived and that item will be delayed until his arrival.

The Chairman also introduced Mr Pat Clarke who is the new Head of Service for Highway Delivery for Leicestershire County Council and welcomed him to the Forum. Cllr R K A Feltham CC asked how he was linked to Matt Reedman. Mr Clarke confirmed that Matt is a member of his team.

002. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors Liquorish, Galton and Pain and District Councillor Bilbie.

003. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

004. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

005. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 25th October 2016 were confirmed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

006. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – GRASS CUTTING

The Forum considered an update by the Director of Environment and Transport regarding grass cutting. This update was introduced by Mr Kirk with a copy filed with the minutes.

Mr Kirk took Members through the update and highlighted the key areas of the report. He advised that the number of customer contacts with regard to grass cutting had reduced in 2016 which followed a number of changes to the service which moved in-house at the end of 2014. The frequency of the cutting reduced from 6 cuts to 5 in 2015 following a public

consultation on the MTFs budget where the public fed back that they felt this was not a high priority and could be reduced, the level of customer contacts regarding the grass cutting that same year increased by 31% from those recorded in 2014. A review was held as a result of this and a decision made by Cabinet in October 2015 to increase urban cuts to 6 a year. Mr Kirk explained that the performance monitoring information showed that 2016 had the lowest number of customer contacts since 2013 when 7 cuts were carried out per year, substantially lower than 2014 and 2015.

Mr Kirk confirmed that a small dedicated team had been set up to deal with visibility splays in response to customer reported safety concerns.

Mr Kirk explained that the Council have a new responsive approach to grass cutting which will be more reactive to the growth of the grass and there may be more cuts earlier to deal with seasonal growing peaks. He went on to say that a number of improvements were being made i.e. technicians will use a live dashboard which will ensure work is programmed more efficiently using 'real time' information.

Mr Kirk advised Members that officers will continue to refine and embed the improvements once the grass cutting season starts.

Cllr C Holyoak DC asked how much had been saved as the whole purpose of the changes was to save money. Mr Kirk explained that the number of cuts had reduced from 7 to 6 and then from 6 to 5 and then increased to 6 following feedback from customers so money will have been saved due to the reduction from 7 to 6 cuts.

Cllr M Rickman DC asked if this level was going to continue into 2017. Mr Kirk stated that due to feedback from Councillors and the number of customer contacts, the frequency will remain at 6 along with a more responsive approach.

Cllr N Hall DC raised concerns about the Shearsby crossroads and the issues in that area due to accidents. He stated his concerns were mainly about the strimming around road signs and asked why weed killer was not used which he felt would be more efficient than strimming/cutting. He also had concerns about the A5199 and kerbside cutting/trimming. Mr Kirk explained that in the report it stated that the quality of the visibility splays in 2016 were not as good as the urban cuts and efforts were being made to improve this situation by carrying out visibility splay cuts earlier and in a more controlled way. Mr Kirk urged Members to report any safety issues or grass cutting issues to Customer Services where they will be logged and prioritised.

Cllr R Page CC agreed with Cllr Hall on the issues he had raised about cutting around signs and she raised concerns about signs and bollards being knocked over during the cutting process and asked if the money we are saving is being spent on rectifying the damage. Cllr Page and Cllr Rickman asked about Parish Councils who carry out the grass cutting on the County Council's behalf and whether, as the refunds were based on 2015, will they get the same amount of reimbursement as before. Mr Kirk advised that he did not have this information to hand but would take this back for officers to investigate and contact Cllr Page directly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) That the report of the Director of Environment and Transport be noted; and
- ii) that officers to look into the amount of reimbursement for Parish Councils doing the grass cutting will remain the same and contact Cllr Page.

007. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 36

A petition with 109 signatures from Ms Joan Gray will be presented. The petition requests that the speed limits in the Langtons be reduced to 40mph.

This item was taken last on the agenda as the Lead Petitioner was waiting for a member of the police to arrive. *PC Steve Winn attended the meeting but unfortunately was detained elsewhere and arrived just as the meeting ended.*

The Chairman asked if Cllr Feltham would like to present this petition on behalf of Mrs Gray who was in attendance but didn't want to speak.

Cllr Feltham presented the on-line petition and stated that Mrs Gray had discussed this with him around four weeks ago about the issues of speeding traffic in the Langtons. He stated that this was a route he used for cutting through to Cambridge and the speed varies through the different villages. He added that along the route are bus stops and shelters and so is used by pedestrians and also farmers with tractors and equipment. He went on to state that there have been a number of near miss accidents which don't get recorded in the accident data but they are important to make a note of. He felt that the 60mph limit should be reduced to 50 if not 40mph. Cllr Feltham stated that Cllr Philip King also supports this petition.

The Chairman stated that the petition will be investigated by officers and a report will be brought back to the next meeting.

008. REPONSE TO PETITION: REQUEST TO REINSTATE THE KNOLL STREET/GARDINER STREET/HIGHCROSS STREET, MARKET HARBOROUGH ROUTEING OF THE CENTREBUS SERVICE 33

The Forum considered a report by the Director of Environment and Transport in response to the petition – request to reinstate the Knoll Street/Gardiner Street/Highcross Street, Market Harborough routeing of the Centrebus Service 33.

Mr Kirk took Members through the report and the investigation which was carried out leading to the report, following the presentation of the petition to Members at the last Highway Forum.

Cllr S Hill CC said that she felt that it was a shame when the bus driver had been doing something incorrectly that was acceptable to the residents and was now being asked to stop doing this to the displeasure of the residents and asked if there had been any complaints whilst the bus driver was using the incorrect route and, if not, can this route be reviewed when contracts are due to be renewed.

Mr Kirk advised that this route is tightly timed and has combined down to 3 separate route loops, from 4, over time and has had many improvements to straighten the route. He went on to say that bus drivers should have been operating that route since 2013 and the bus company has now been informed they must use the registered route. Mr Kirk asked that any issues with the bus not picking people up as they have agreed to on the 'Hail and Ride' part of the route, be reported to officers through the Customer Service Centre.

The Chairman stated that the Lead Petitioner asked for her thanks to be passed onto the officers for their consideration on this report.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report of the Director of Environment and Transport be noted.

009. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE STRATEGY AND POLICY REVIEW

The Forum considered a report by the Director of Environment and Transport with regard to the Highway Maintenance Strategy and Policy Review. The report was introduced by Mr Kirk with a copy filed with the minutes.

Mr Kirk took Members through the report and advised that this followed on from the report to the last meeting entitled A-Roads to Zebras – A Comprehensive Maintenance Review. This detailed the reasons for the review and the current financial challenges and the alteration in the way that funding is being made available by the Department for Transport, together with the changes that will need to occur to comply with the new Code of Practice. We need to alter our approach to Highway Maintenance to maximise the quality of the highway network with amount of funding available. We will need to take more of a risk based approach while at the same time operating within a considerably reduced budget envelop.

Mr Kirk reported that the views of the public on services and priorities were fed into the comprehensive report to Cabinet on 13th December 2016, which set out a draft Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy which have been produced and are attached to the report for information. Mr Kirk encouraged Members to feed into the current public consultation on the draft policy and strategy that is now open and runs until 26th March and to also encourage others to respond. The results will be used to formulate the final policy and strategy which will determine future years' work programmes.

Mr Kirk went through the bullet points at para 3 (page 25) which detail the reasons that the review is necessary and highlighted the flow chart on page 27 which shows the journey to operational delivery.

Mr Kirk advised that at the last Forum Members were interested in drainage and gully emptying and highlighted the table on page 57 which gives the outline strategy for drainage. It states that evidence will be gathered on where gullies need emptying the most and this will allow an assessment of the risk and a targeted prioritised approach will follow.

Cllr Page raised concerns about the damage to the road caused by lorries on route to and from Bruntingthorpe Aerodrome every day near to Cllr Hall's house in Knaptoft, Lutterworth. She stated that lorries take the junction too quickly, sway and have damaged signs. Cllr Page asked as part of the strategy can officers gather this evidence for when planning applications are received we can claw back funding for example at Magna Park and other industrial parks. Mr Kirk highlighted the table on page 46 which gives details about hierarchy and classification of highways and on page 47 the details about condition assessment. He went on to say that we do make recommendations to the Planning Authorities but it is incredibly hard to find evidence when the network is already there. If we have evidence an insurance claim can be made but the normal wear and tear on the network is what this report is about. Cllr Hall agreed with Cllr Page and went on to raise concerns about access from A5199 crossroads which he thought was dangerous and not suitable for transporters. He stated that if the weeds were dealt with at the crossroads at Shearsby there would be no need to trim this area.

Mr Kirk stated that the approach that is being taken is more risk based and will look at some areas more frequently and others less frequently to ensure efficiencies are made where appropriate. He went on to say that in order for this to happen we need Councillors and members of the public to report any issues through the Customer Service Centre.

Mr Kirk reminded Members that there is less money available in the long term and increasingly the money that is available is subject to a competitive process therefore it is important that we do things in a more efficient manner.

Cllr Page reported damage to a layby by workers carrying out gas works. She stated that she had not got a photo of how it looked previously so had no evidence of what damage they had done. Mr Kirk stated that inspectors do carry out surveys on a regular basis and can make insurance claims in cases of accident damage but we cannot do this for wear and tear issues.

Mr Kirk reminded Members of the massive reduction in the budget and the 78% reduction in real terms from the budget in 2010/11 to the indicative budget for 2019/20 and that we are seeing the impacts of that reduction. Mr Kirk also reminded Members of the satisfaction survey which was reported to the last Highway Forum which results showed that satisfaction was still very high with Highways and stated that when he drives into other Counties he does notice a significant difference.

Cllr Hill stated that we need to be mindful of the budget cuts and said that she remembered this approach being followed previously with gully emptying but with no data collection which led to problems and to the approach being reverted back. Cllr Hill raised concerns about the water coming from the farmer's fields and with ditches not being cleared by landowners this is where some of the flooding is created. Mr Kirk said that there were two reports to the last Highway Forum, one about Highway Drainage and the other was about our responsibilities as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), this detailed how we liaise with Severn Trent Water and also landowners.

Mr Kirk said that at the last meeting it was agreed to invite Severn Trent Water to the Highway Forum and hopefully a representative will be able to attend the next meeting to talk about their planned work in the Harborough area. Mr Kirk urged Members to inform officers through Customer Services of flooding issues as a dedicated team has been set up to specifically look at these issues and there has been a lot of proactive work being carried out. He went on to say that investment had been made in purchasing 5 new gully emptiers due to the work being done maintaining the asset in the correct way, as currently vehicles are being hired and the 2 that the Council own are now 12 years old.

Cllr Feltham raised concern about dirty signs covered with dirt and moss, specifically on the Billesdon Bypass signs. He stated that he felt that cleaning signs on main roads should be dealt with by the qualified professionals and not the volunteers or Parish Councils, although they could do this task on other minor roads if they have the capacity to take this on.

Mr Kirk thanked Members for their comments and stated that the County Council will be providing information in the form of FAQs and advice to carry out the work sensibly as part of the approach to maintain the assets. Mr Kirk stated that a litter picking campaign is carried out by the local residents in his area which is very successful.

The Chairman advised that he also got involved with his local litter picking campaign and encouraged others to get involved stating that the co-operation they receive from the District Council was phenomenal.

Cllr Hall raised some issues that he had concerns with, as follows:

- i) Grass verges on the A4304 cut up and damaged with a 6-9" gap/trough at the edge of the carriageway .
- ii) Grips not cleaned out or not cleaned out properly which means when tractors pass by these fill up again as mud is moved back into the grips
- iii) Road from Shearsby to Arnesby – water always present although a number of attempts had been made to repair the leak, could cause danger in icy weather.

The Chairman stated that springs can pop through tarmac roads and this was the case on the Shearsby to Arnesby Road, it may not be coming from fields.

Mr Clarke stated that works have been started today on the A426 clearing grips out and he is aware of the problems. He urged Members to report any issues they come across through the Customer Service Centre and we can then put them together in a programme of works.

The Chairman advised of problems in Cotesbach with pots being emptied which immediately fill up again as the water has nowhere to go and he felt that it is no good emptying the pots it's the bit in between that needs clearing.

Mr Kirk stated that the Highway Delivery team are starting to sort the issues out but we need Members and the public to report any issues.

Cllr Rickman stated that his village carry out a litter picking exercise too. He asked what the timescales are for responding to issues such as damaged signs and street furniture. Mr Kirk stated that it depending on the scale of the issue. If it was a safety issue then this will be prioritised and dealt with very quickly. If it is something that is not dangerous, works will be put together into a programme that can be scheduled in for a later date, it could be something like 60 days for non-dangerous work and this could be programmed in a more efficient manner. Mr Kirk said that it would be better if we could produce some specific timescales that can then be given out by the Customer Services team which would then help to manage the caller's expectations.

Cllr Rickman reported a damaged VAS sign on Medbourne Road into Hallaton which had been reported to the CSC several times. Mr Kirk agreed to check this out and report back to Cllr Rickman.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i) That the report of the Director of Environment and Transport be noted; and
- ii) that officers investigate the damaged VAS sign on Medbourne Road into Hallaton and report back to Cllr Rickman.
- iii) That details of the current response times to reported incidents that Highways follow are provided in the minutes

010. 2015/16 MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMMES – INFORMATION ITEM

Members noted the report.

011. PROGRAMME OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT WORK – CURRENT POSITION – INFORMATION ITEM

Members noted the report.

012. ON-GOING ACTION STATEMENT

The ongoing action was noted.

013. ITEMS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

The Chairman asked Members to let officers have in writing any items for consideration for future agendas within 10 days of the date of the meeting. These items can be sent to Sue Dann, email sue.dann@leics.gov.uk.

014. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

015. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chairman confirmed the date of the next meeting is **12th July 2017 at 4.30pm.**

The Chairman asked Members to make a note of the date.

016. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chairman asked Members to look at attending the 'In Work' event at Bruntingthorpe, he thought that some of the Members went to the last event with an official contingent from

Harborough District Council. He encouraged them to organise another trip as it was well worth a visit.

The Chairman thanked Members, officers and the public for their attendance and contribution at the meeting. He stated that this would be his last Highway Forum as he was not standing for re-election.

28th February 2017

Chairman

4.30 – 5.14 pm

Date

