

Minutes of a meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 2 September 2021.

PRESENT

Mr. R. G. Allen CC
Mr. T. Barkley CC
Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC
Mr. T. Gillard CC

Mr. Max Hunt CC
Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC
Mr. C. A. Smith CC

In attendance

Mr. O. O'Shea CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transportation
Mrs. M.A. Wright CC – Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transportation

1. Appointment of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. T. Gillard CC be appointed Chairman of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2022.

Mr. T. Gillard CC – in the Chair

2. Election of Deputy Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Mr. K. Merrie CC be appointed Deputy Chairman of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2022.

3. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

4. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that the following questions had been received from Mr. M.J. Hunt CC:

The budget for bus stops, shelters and passenger information

1. What has been the budget for bus stops, shelters and passenger information over each of the last five years?

Reply from Chairman

Year	<p style="text-align: center;">Budget – covering:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bus shelter cleaning and maintenance contract.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bus service area guides and timetables.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bus stop infrastructure (flag, poles and shelters).</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Public Transport Technician equipment.</p>
2017/18	£70,000
2018/19	£70,000
2019/20	£67,500
2020/21	£67,500
2021/22	£50,500

N.B the above table does not include real time information costs.

2. How many new bus shelter requests have been received and how many agreed in that time?"

Reply from Chairman:

Since 2018 we have received 7 new shelter requests that have not been agreed and 4 replacement shelter requests which have all been agreed.

“The Passenger Transport Strategy

3. The Passenger Transport Strategy, agreed by Cabinet states:

11.1 Leicestershire County Council will continue to provide and maintain infrastructure that facilitates passenger transport use, in cooperation with operators where appropriate. This includes bus stop poles/flags and shelters, information display cases at stops, and interchange facilities. Selection of locations for any new bus stops and shelters will follow good practice and will particularly consider accessibility for people with impaired mobility.

What is “good practice” when selecting the location of bus shelters and where can it be accessed?

Reply from Chairman

Experienced County Council officers make the assessment by using their knowledge of the network and by carefully considering each request based on frequency, usage and locality as well as reviewing daily passenger usage. As there is no specifically defined scoring criteria covering other factors to determine shelter requests, it is recognised that this approach requires a review. The intention going forward is to work towards developing a clear policy for bus shelter requests which will include a scoring framework for a range of factors.

4. When considering “accessibility for people with impaired mobility” is this likely to include members of the public with learning difficulties and unable to use a private car?

Reply from Chairman:

The strategy and paragraph referenced covers physical impaired mobility and consideration is given to accessibility in terms of raised kerbs where appropriate and low floor vehicles. Through the siting of bus stops (i.e. flag and pole) access to public transport is available on a universal basis to everyone in Leicestershire regardless of disability or learning difficulties. It is therefore anticipated that those with learning difficulties and unable to use a private car would have access, as above, or to other County Council transport provision i.e. Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport/Adult Social Care transport where eligible.

Supplementary Question from Mr. M. J. Hunt CC:

Mr. Hunt CC requested clarification on whether the Strategy covered impaired mobility or just physical impaired mobility and what in fact the difference between the two was and whether access to public transport was intended to be on a universal basis. The Chairman offered to provide Mr. Hunt with a written answer after the meeting.

5. How many bus shelters do not meet your criteria or have low patronage and for how long do we continue to maintain them?

Reply from Chairman:

Once a shelter is installed, usage is not monitored, and we would only look to remove a shelter in extenuating circumstances. The reason for this is that the cost to remove a shelter is far greater than the on-going cleaning and maintenance costs. In addition, the bus network is subject to change and where operators reinstate services, a bus stop may once again come back into use. The shelters that are the responsibility of the County Council are maintained through an external contractor.

6. Until several years ago several local highways functions, including bus shelters, were delegated to district councils covering unparished areas. Can you confirm these so called “Highways Agencies” have now ceased and the responsibility for bus shelters now resides exclusively in accord with the County’s Passenger Transport Strategy?

Reply from Chairman:

There are over 800 shelters throughout the county and the County Council are responsible for 217 of these. The remaining shelters are the responsibility of parish or district council both in terms of ownership and on-going maintenance. The District Council previously supplied bus shelters under the local Agency agreement with the County Council however they no longer provide these.

Supplementary Question from Mr. M. J. Hunt CC:

Mr. Hunt CC requested clarification on the part of the answer which stated “The District Council previously supplied bus shelters under the local Agency agreement with the County Council however they no longer provide these.” Mr. Hunt CC asked for confirmation that this meant District Councils no longer provided bus shelters at all and whether Parish Councils provided them. The Chairman offered to provide Mr. Hunt with a written answer after the meeting.

7. With the growth of ‘on demand’ services will some bus shelters become redundant?

Reply from Chairman:

No. Fixed bus stops and shelters will continue to be used for demand led services with the addition of some virtual stops where appropriate.

8. What proportion of passengers now use ‘on demand’ services as opposed to a ‘traditional’ bus?

Reply from Chairman:

Currently in Leicestershire there is only one ‘on demand’ service which is in the New Lubbesthorpe area. This therefore represents a very small number of passengers using this type of service. The County Council has been successful in receiving the recent Rural Mobility Fund and it is anticipated that a further new ‘on demand’ service will start early next year. Usage for the New Lubbesthorpe service is growing steadily and is still a relatively new service which started in April 2019.

Please note ‘on demand’ has been defined as a service which can be booked via an app on the day of travel within a defined zoned. There are also approximately 47 demand responsive transport (DRT) services in the county. These services need to be pre-booked the day before travel and operate on a fixed time and destination basis.

5. To advise of any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

6. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

7. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

8. Presentation of Petitions.

The Chief Executive reported that no petitions had been received under Standing Order 35.

9. Highways and Transport Performance Report to June 2021.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Chief Executive and Director of Environment and Transport which provided the latest performance update on the key performance indicators that the Council was responsible for within its Strategic Plan covering Highways & Transport Services. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) A member raised concerns regarding the amount of warehousing in Leicestershire that was only accessible via minor unclassified roads and the consequent impact on those roads from HGVs. In response it was explained that the statutory duty of the local authority was to facilitate the movement of vehicles through the network however the local authority did have the power to impose weight limits on roads for safety reasons and the County Council had exercised this power throughout Leicestershire where it was appropriate. HGVs were exempt from the weight restrictions if they were accessing a property that was only accessible via a minor road.
- (ii) The performance indicators which related to 'where maintenance should be considered' did not indicate whether that maintenance work had actually been carried out and a member questioned whether there should be a separate performance indicator relating to maintenance work actually carried out. In response it was explained that these performance indicators related to maintenance work that was still required after the planned maintenance programme had already been carried out. The maintenance was carried out both proactively and reactively and there was often extra maintenance work that was required to be carried out in addition to the planned maintenance work. The planned maintenance programme was published on the County Council's website annually.
- (iii) During the Covid-19 pandemic both service provision and patronage of bus services had significantly dropped. Service provision had now increased to approximately 90% of pre-pandemic levels however patronage was currently 60-80% of pre-pandemic levels. Bus operators were aiming for patronage to return to 90% of pre-pandemic levels by 2022.
- (iv) During the pandemic Government had provided the Covid-19 Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) to support bus services but this funding ceased on 31 August 2021. To replace the CBSSG a recovery grant of £226.5 million would be available nationally from 1 September 2021 to 31 March 2022. Should patronage not return to close to pre-pandemic levels by the end of March 2022 then there would be a challenge to maintain bus services without additional Government funding.
- (v) Public satisfaction with the Rights of Way Network had increased and it was believed this was because of more people using footpaths during the Covid-19 pandemic as exhibited by the increase in enquiries from the public received by the Rights of Way Team. Satisfaction with cycle routes and facilities had decreased and

in response to a question as to whether this was due to reduced funding it was explained that it was likely to be due to a variety of factors. Local Authorities were required to bid for funding for cycle routes; there was no funding provided by central government for cycling as a matter of course.

- (vi) It was questioned why the ‘% of businesses saying that a reduction in traffic congestion would significantly affect their business’ was at 53% when there had been much less traffic congestion due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that the data for this performance indicator came from a survey conducted by the Local Enterprise Partnership and the question was a small part of a much larger survey. Whilst these surveys did not always provide the whole picture with regards to public satisfaction, they could be used to monitor trends over time and decide when and where action needed to be taken.
- (vii) The NHT survey in relation to the number of people satisfied with the condition of the condition of pavements and footpaths was sent to Parish Councils and County Councillors as well as to the public for feedback. The survey needed to be completed by as broad a section of residents of Leicestershire as possible to ensure an accurate picture was received and that any anomalies did not affect the overall results. Suggestions from members for how the surveys could be disseminated wider were welcomed.
- (viii) A member requested that future performance reports provide the sample size when referring to key performance indicators.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the key performance indicators that the Council is responsible for within its Strategic Plan covering Highways & Transport Services be noted.

10. Dates of future meetings.

RESOLVED:

That future meetings of the Committee take place on the following dates at 2.00pm:

Thursday 4 November 2021;
 Thursday 20 January 2022;
 Thursday 3 March 2022;
 Thursday 9 June 2022;
 Thursday 1 September 2022;
 Thursday 3 November 2022.