

Minutes of a meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 9 June 2022.

PRESENT

Mr. R. G. Allen CC
Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC
Mr. T. Gillard CC
Mrs. A. J. Hack CC

Mr. B. Lovegrove CC
Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC
Mr. L. Phillimore CC

In attendance

Mr. O. O'Shea CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport

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 2023.

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 2023.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2022 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

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

5. Questions asked by members under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

6. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. 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.

Mr. L. Phillimore CC declared a Non-Registerable Interest in agenda item 10: Special Educational Needs School Transport Service – Provision Briefing as his wife was employed by the County Council in Special Educational Needs. This item did not directly relate to or affect the financial or other wellbeing of Mr. Phillimore's wife to an extent that this prevented Mr Phillimore from participating in the meeting.

8. Declarations of the Party Whip.

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

9. Presentation of Petitions.

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

10. Special Educational Needs School Transport Service - Provision Briefing.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided the current performance information regarding the Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport expenditure for the academic year 2021/22, including the drivers of 'spend' in this area, actions taken to suppress costs and future demands for the SEN service. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) The County Council had a role as a Corporate Parent for these young people up until the age of 25 however the exact responsibilities the Council had were different for the 16-18 age group and the 19 to 25 age group.
- (ii) Rising fuel costs were a concern and the Council was working with suppliers such as taxi drivers to mitigate the problem and also trying to minimise costs by using its own fleet. However, this was made more difficult by the fact that some children were unable to travel in the same vehicle as other children.
- (iii) There had been a growth in Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) numbers of 54% over the previous five years, which was significantly higher than the national average. In response to a question from a member as to what was causing this increase and whether Leicestershire County Council started from below the national average, the Director of Environment and Transport agreed to consult with the Children and Families Department and provide the answer to Committee members after the meeting.

- (iv) Concerns were raised about the locations of special schools and whether consideration was given to transport issues before the locations were decided. Transport was not usually a primary consideration when the schools were set up and more needed to be done to ensure that transport issues were considered earlier in the planning process.
- (v) The County Council had received several complaints from parents about SEND transport and specifically a lack of communication from the Council regarding issues which had arisen. Some of the problems had arisen due to the amount of late applications for transport. It was important to communicate with parents as early as possible regarding any transport problems so alternative arrangements could be made.
- (vi) The Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport provided reassurance that he would continue to work with parents to address areas of concern and he joined the Committee in thanking officers in the Highways and Transport department for the work they had carried out in relation to SEN transport.

RESOLVED:

That the current performance information regarding the Special Educational Needs (SEN) transport expenditure for the academic year 2021/22 be noted with concern and the actions being taken to suppress costs and future demands for the SEN service be supported.

11. Members' Highway Fund.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on the position of the Members Highway Fund (MHF) at the end of its first year (2021/22) and beginning of its second (2022/23). A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussions the following points were noted:

- (i) The Committee fully endorsed the Members Highway Fund and the processes that had been put in place for administering it. Feedback from members regarding the new portal for submitting applications was particularly positive though it was noted that there was no facility for uploading photographs. The Director of Environment and Transport agreed to look into this.
- (ii) Whilst the data from Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs (MVAS) could not be used to prosecute individual drivers, it was passed onto the Police to give them an idea of where to deploy mobile speed cameras. The County Council would firstly look to the Police to take enforcement action. Due to funding issues the County Council had to prioritise sites where there were the most accidents so it was only if a location met the criteria for numbers of accidents that the Council would take further measures such as installing traffic calming measures and additional signage. The MVAS data was also used to help the County Council build up a picture of Road Traffic issues across Leicestershire.

- (iii) The Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport joined the Committee in thanking officers for their work in relation to the Member Highways Fund.

RESOLVED:

That the position of the Members Highway Fund at the end of its first year (2021/22) and beginning of its second (2022/23) be welcomed and supported.

12. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 1 September 2022 at 2.00pm.

2.00 - 2.48 pm
09 June 2022

CHAIRMAN