

Minutes of a meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 8 June 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. T. Gillard CC (in the Chair)

Mr. R. G. Allen CC
Mrs. A. J. Hack CC
Mr. B. Lovegrove CC

Mr. L. Phillimore CC
Mr. C. A. Smith CC

In attendance

Mr. O. O'Shea CC, Lead Member for Highways, Transport and Flooding

1. Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED:

That Mr. T. Gillard CC be appointed Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2024.

Mr T. Gillard CC in the Chair

2. Election of Deputy Chairman

RESOLVED:

That Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC be elected Deputy Chairman for the period ending with the date of the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2024.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

The following question received under Standing Order 34 was put to the Chairman of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Question asked by Mr. Mike Jelfs

“My question is related to the promotion of the government initiative of the £2 single bus fare, which I believe has now been extended to October. I have not noticed any physical advertising on Buses or on Bus stops or promotion on social media of this, surely it is worth investing a sum of money on this to get more people to try using the bus instead of their car?”

Response by the Chairman

The County Council does not own any advertising bus shelters, and its shelter estate has limited space for printed matter which is prioritised for timetable and service departure information. The Council, however, plans to undertake some promotional activity through its social media channels following the recent news of the scheme extension.

Supplementary Question

Mr Jelfs asked, to understand why bus operators have chosen not to advertise the £2 capped fare widely, what incentives Leicestershire County Council offered to operators to increase passenger numbers and improve the previously mentioned KPI, especially as routes were often subsidised so an increase in passenger numbers would likely be offset by a decrease in the subsidy?

Response by the Chairman

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director of Environment and Transport responded that whilst the County Council was aware a number of bus operators have done some advertising and marketing on the £2 fare cap, it was not able to answer for those who had chosen not to. This would be a question to pose to those operators.

The Director reported that the County Council undertook a number of activities to help support and build bus patronage. Its Choose How You Move website contained all the County's bus timetables and had a journey planner available to help support people to use buses. The council's experience over the years had shown that more targeted approaches yielded better results, for example, the Council held travel clinics with businesses across the County to talk to individuals about their travel needs and help support them with a tailored travel option focusing on using public transport, walking, cycling or car share where feasible. That individual support often helped give the confidence for people to make a change in how they travelled. In a similar vein the Council had been doing work to increase the uptake of the free bus passes that were offered to residents of new developments. Evidence showed that when people had a significant change in their life such as moving house, they were more likely to make other changes such as how they travel. This work was beginning to see an increase in uptake of these passes.

More recently the Government had awarded the County Council just under £2m from their Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus funding. The Council would be seeking to use this to continue to support the local bus market and help transition the County to a more sustainable rural public transport model. Finally, this would be reflected in the ambitions of the new Local Transport Plan being developed over the next year in which public transport, as well as active travel (walking, cycling and wheeling), would be key elements."

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

The Chief Executive reported that the following questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5) from Mr M. Hunt CC and Mrs A. Hack CC.

(a) Questions asked by Mr. M. Hunt CC:

- “1. I was sad, but not entirely surprised, to see that Leicestershire achieved a score of zero in the recent DfT local authority active travel capability ratings. We were matched on zero by Rutland, whilst the City of Leicester top scored. A zero score indicates (“Local leadership for active travel is not obvious, no significant plans are in place, the authority has delivered only lower complexity schemes”). Why have we done so badly and what are we doing about it?
2. What will this mean for future bidding to Government for active travel in the County? (I would be grateful if the link can be embedded in the text or placed as a footnote: [Local authority active travel capability ratings](#))
3. When nearly 150,000 Leicestershire residents live in the Leicester Urban Area (ONS), why can't we achieve the same active travel capability across area; why does it stop at the city boundary?
4. When small towns hosting universities in Britain are well known to excel in cycle provision, why is Loughborough, a town which could create the critical mass for cycling and walking, the odd one out?
5. The school run is one of the major contributors to congestion at the morning peak hour, why are we no longer prioritising School Travel Plans and helping schools to make them more effective so we can publish real achievements.
6. A National Cycle Route (NCR6) crosses the M1 and the West of Loughborough SUE and has proved a safe route for cyclists and walkers between Shepshed and Loughborough, as the SUE develops will the County be adopting the path and will we be insisting on a durable surface of sufficient width? What other paths will the County be adopting within this extensive development?”

Reply by the Chairman

- “1. Assessment scores were made by the Active Travel England (ATE), based largely on a self-assessment form completed by each Local Transport Authority. In the case of Leicestershire's score, ATE recognised the level of commitment to walking and cycling being demonstrated by the Authority in terms of the adoption of a Cycling and Walking Strategy and the use of its own monies to develop a programme of countywide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs). The primary reason that the Authority received a zero score, is because it had not yet developed and delivered a ‘transformative’ cycling and walking project, something reflecting the Government's vision for cycling and walking as set out in ‘Gear Change’ and in national cycle infrastructure design guidance LTN1/20.

A key reason for this is the availability of funding. With a capital programme already heavily committed to supporting other key Government policies – including provision of infrastructure vital to the delivery of more new homes and to the creation of new jobs – and without access to significant funding streams that have been/are available to urban and metropolitan areas (such as the Transforming Cities Fund and The City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements), the Authority has not to date been in the position to secure the millions of pounds necessary to deliver ‘transformative’ projects.

However, the Authority is working pro-actively with ATE to improve its capability rating to at least one by this summer. A number of actions are being undertaken, including the provision of officer training including to enhance knowledge and skills in the design of LTN1/20 schemes, Member training (the planned All Member Briefing session on 6th June) and the setting up of an Active Travel Forum. Together with the ongoing development of the LCWIP programme, officers are confident that going forward this will place the Authority in a far stronger position to benefit from future Government funding opportunities and to secure developer contributions towards the delivery of projects that will 'transform' provision for pedestrians and cyclists.

2. Were the Authority not to be working proactively with ATE to improve its score to at least one by this summer, then in the future it would be ineligible to bid to ATE (Government) for funding to support the delivery of both revenue and capital funded active travel projects.

Achieving a score of at least one will mean that the Authority will be eligible to bid, albeit there would be no guarantee of success (which is an inherent risk with any 'bid driven' system of awarding funding). The zero score has not altered the Authority's commitment to continue with active travel work, including to develop a programme of LCWIPs and to undertake promotional and educational work under the umbrella of Choose How You Move.

3. As per the response to question 1, as an urban area Leicester City Council has received over £32m of Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) monies that it has used to help to pay towards the improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure within its boundaries. The Government's stated focus for the TCF is "[to drive up] productivity through investments in public and sustainable transport infrastructure in some of England's largest city regions." Non-city areas have not had access to a similarly targeted fund.

However, the County Council has been working hard to ensure that it is best placed to seek to benefit from future funding opportunities to improve cycling and walking infrastructure in areas adjoining Leicester City. An LCWIP for the South of Leicester is well advanced and close to completion, and it is currently intended to bring that to the Cabinet for approval towards the end of this calendar year. An LCWIP for the North of Leicester is also in development and it is presently intended to bring that to the Cabinet for approval in early 2024. Officers have been in consultations with Leicester City Council colleagues to seek to ensure that both LCWIPs align with their current and any future proposals for cycling and walking improvements within the City.

The LCWIP documents will set out the Authority's ambitions for significantly improving cycling and walking networks in areas surrounding the City of Leicester and will provide a basis for seeking to secure funding for projects, both from the Government and developers.

4. Measures to improve walking and cycling provision in Loughborough have previously been undertaken and paid for by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and as part of the Town Centre Major Project. Building on this and in recognition of the key role that the town plays in providing for new homes, jobs and in hosting a world-class university, the development of an LCWIP covering Loughborough, including Shepshed, has been prioritised. As with all current LCWIP's in development, extensive engagement has been undertaken to inform the development of the Loughborough Area LCWIP, and it included: Members, District Council, advocacy

groups and the public. It is now at an advanced stage of development and close to completion, and it is currently intended to bring it to the Cabinet for approval towards the end of this calendar year (alongside the LCWIP for South of Leicester referenced in response to question 3).

The LCWIP will set out ambitions for further improving cycling and walking networks in Loughborough and Shepshed and will provide a basis for seeking to secure funding for projects, both from the Government and developers.

5. Working with schools continues to be a priority for Leicestershire County Council. The Safe and Sustainable Travel Team works closely with schools across the county, under the Choose How You Move brand to enable and encourage active and sustainable travel journeys.

The Choose How You Move Team works in partnership with Active Together and district councils to deliver a programme of initiatives. The MODESHIFT STARS travel planning tool is available free of charge for all primary schools within England and Leicestershire County Council continues to promote this as part of the Choose How You Move programme. This requires commitment from the school to resource, manage and record data including initiatives and survey results into the system. Although not all schools currently use MODESHIFT STARS to record active and sustainable travel activity, we have worked with several schools across the county to encourage active and sustainable travel. Please see below some examples of projects delivered within the last 12 months:

- Launch of 16 park and stride sites
- School Street Trials at three schools
- Provision of Bikeability
- Performance in education – Air Quality and Active Travel
- October - Active Travel Month
- Junior Road Safety Officer Scheme
- 13 schools awarded active and sustainable travel grants

As part of our 2023-2024 schools programme the Choose How You Move Schools Officer will be working with the Active Together Sports and Physical Activity Network to identify seven schools (one from each district) to provide additional resources to support the development of a minimum bronze accredited MODESHIFT STARS travel plan.

6. The cycle route is already part of the existing Public Right of Way (PROW) Network, Footpath K68 and Bridleway L17. We're not aware of any plan the developer has to upgrade the condition of this route to offer for full highway adoption.

There are a number of other links proposed in planning (plan included) and we expect that the developer's intention is for those that aren't existing PROWs to remain privately maintained, however, it is up to the developer as to whether they want to offer them for adoption."

(b) Questions asked by Mrs. Amanda Hack CC:

“Please could I ask a question as a County Councillor on behalf of the South Leicestershire Litter Wombles, there is a member of the management committee that is a constituent. Whilst I do litter pick and engage with the South Leicestershire Litter Wombles, I am not an official member of the constituted element of the group.

South Leicestershire Litter Wombles have appreciated the wide level of support offered to the wombles from the County Council and District Councils. All wombles care for the Environment and feel that the best way forward is to work in partnership to clear up Leicestershire Countryside so have the following questions:

1. In light of the recent initiative of No Mow May, the Litter wombles are concerned at the potential level of litter that could be trapped in the verges before they are cut. Picking up shredded mowed litter accounts for many hours spent by wombles across the county during the mowing season. Could Leicestershire County Council and the District Councils start working together to do a litter pick before the areas are mowed, preventing shredded litter and the damage to the environment this causes.
2. Who within the authority with responsibility for highways maintenance (including mowing) can support the litter wombles and cross District Council liaison meetings?
3. The level of Highways equipment that is picked each week is always significant, with stray cones and ‘A’ frames. What are Leicestershire County Council doing to reduce the impact they are having on our local environment, and how are sub-contractors managed to take greater responsibility for removing all equipment once highways works are completed?”

Reply by the Chairman

- 1 Prior to each annual grass-cutting season commencing, the Council provides details of grass-cutting programmes to district councils, with links to the Council website where the information is updated throughout the season. District councils can use this information to ensure that litter picking is co-ordinated with the programmed mowing dates.
2. The Director further reported that representatives from the South Leicestershire Litter Wombles (SLLW) had a regular meeting with the County Council Highway Maintenance officers. The Head of Service for Highways and Transport Delivery attended these meetings. If the SLLW would like to rearrange these into a joint meeting with district officers, the same Council officers would continue to attend and support.

Also, if there were any specific enquiries prior to or after liaison meetings, these could be directed through the Council’s Customer Services and a member of the Environment Team would respond direct.

3. The Director responded that all works promoters that were authorised to work in the Highway (all the different utility contractors, the many developers and the highway authority) had a duty to remove their roadworks signs at the end of their works. The Council’s internal workforce is constantly reminded of this and following the recent meetings with the SLLW’s one of the actions was been for the Council to provide

identification on all of its signs to support ownership of any abandoned signs (please see photos below). A further action has been to reinforce the point with utility companies and statutory undertakers at the quarterly liaison meetings.

Any abandoned roadwork signs that were reported to the Council were brought to the attention of the relevant contractor (where known) and they were required to arrange for its collection at their expense. Anecdotally, the SLLW have reported a reduction in roadworks equipment following the Council's actions.



Supplementary Questions

Mrs Hack, on the response to Question One, asked what work could be done in advance to agree responsibilities between the districts and the County on litter picks before a mow, and could the authorities work more closely together to prevent litter shredding?

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director of Environment and Transport responded and advised that, as mentioned in the initial response, the County Council already provided district councils with its grass-cutting schedule well in advance to allow them to programme their litter picks. The statutory responsibility for litter clearance sat with the district authorities and the Council did not have the power to instruct a district council to carry out litter clearance. The County Council did, however, try to enable a joined-up approach to litter picking and grass cutting and were happy to enter into discussions with district authorities to improve where it could.

In response to Question Two, Mrs Hack commented that the litter wombles had collected 24,000 bags of litter from Leicestershire in their own time. Having a named person who they could liaise with would not only speed up the process but provide leadership at local authority level and Mrs Hack asked if it was possible to provide a Highways named person directly to the group?

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Director of Environment and Transport advised that in the first instance the County Council proposed exploring through the regular liaison meetings what the needs of the Wombles were from the highway perspective, and if these could not be addressed through those meetings then identifying a specific contact within the Service would be considered.

6. 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.

7. Declarations of interest in respect of items on the agenda.

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.

8. Declarations of the Party Whip in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 16.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

9. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

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

10. Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy - Public Consultation.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport, the purpose of which was to seek the views of the Committee on the draft updated Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Leicestershire (LLFRMS) as part of the public consultation. The update had been provided by the Council in its role as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The LLFRMS detailed the principles, objectives and measures by which local flood risk is to be managed in Leicestershire, and specified the roles and responsibilities of the Council, partner organisations and the public. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

The Cabinet Lead Member for Highways, Transportation and Flooding thanked officers for the thorough work that had been undertaken on what was a very complex issue.

Arising from discussion, the following points arose:

- i. A Member asked for clarity around revisions to the thresholds criteria for formal flood investigations, specifically in respect of two commercial properties that had flooded, and asked if they were small retail units, or warehouses with substantial commercial impact if flooded. Members were informed that the criteria were not absolute, and that the Director would use discretion to undertake formal investigation when it was considered necessary. It was further noted the Formal Flood Investigations Policy had been amended to bring it up to meet national guidance, and for responses to be consistent, to allow for quicker response with proportionate resources dedicated to incidents.
- ii. A Member questioned if the County Council maintained its own flooding records, or whether it relied on those of the Environment Agency (EA). Members noted that, in terms of evidence bases and formal processes like consultation for development, the EA's records were the first point of reference, but that the Council was also building up records of response, complaints and incidents

investigated, and evidence could be used to challenge the EA's records that were not quite correct. It was envisaged that discrepancies would become less as records were developed.

- iii. A Member queried how culverts were managed in the Strategy, as not all of them appeared to be the County Council's responsibility, with some falling under Town Council responsibility, and others looked after by Severn Trent, as culverts potentially caused downstream flooding risk. Members were informed that the mapping and understanding of the asset infrastructure was a huge challenge but mapping these had been a good process undertaken to help manage flood risks better in future. This work was still in progress.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supported the draft Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

11. The Living Waterway Project - Presentation

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Environment and Transport on the County Council's Living Waterway project at its Croft Depot. This was provided following a request previously made by Members of the Committee.

A Member queried if all waste in terms of gully clearance was able to be treated at the one facility, and if it was something other authorities were routinely doing, or if it was unique to Leicestershire and if so, how it was being promoted. It was also asked if the facility had had an impact on the response cost of tipping and if there was a cost saving on treating waste through the plant. Members were informed that there was a cost saving of approximately £300,000 per annum as the facility used before Croft had not been as deep, therefore there had been a tipping charge to take the waste elsewhere. The gully waste and jetting units now used the one site and had only been unable to do so if a load had a contaminant in the waste.

Members further noted that most authorities had different arrangements for gully cleansing, with most of them now looking to separate liquids from solids, with the County Council actively promoting the system being used at Croft to other interested authorities, emphasising the importance of receiving good advice such as that the County Council had received from a company in Fife when building the treatment plant at Croft.

The Cabinet Lead Member said that the visit to the site by local school children as mentioned in the presentation had been a very interesting and enjoyable day for all.

The Chairman welcomed the presentation which all Members agreed had been very informative, and requested that a site visit be arranged for all Members of the Committee in the Autumn. The Chairman asked that that an invitation to attend the visit also be extended to the Lead Member and Members, of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation on the Living Water Project at Croft Depot be noted.

- b. That the Director of Environment and Transport be requested to arrange a visit to the site for Members of the Committee and that Members of the Environment and Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee also be invited.

12. Dates of Future Meetings

RESOLVED:

That the dates of future meeting of the Committee scheduled to take place on the following dates, all starting at 2.00pm, be noted.

Thursday 7 September 2023

Thursday 9 November 2023

Thursday 18 January 2024

Thursday 7 March 2024

Thursday 6 June 2024

Thursday 5 September 2024

Thursday 7 November 2024

2.00 – 2.52pm
08 June 2023

CHAIRMAN