

Minutes of a meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 9 November 2023.

PRESENT

Mr. T. Gillard CC (in the Chair)

Mr. R. G. Allen CC
Mr. D. C. Bill MBE 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, Lead Member for Highways and Transport (in remote attendance)
Mrs M. Wright CC, Cabinet Support Member

24. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

25. Question Time.

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

26. 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).

27. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

28. 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.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

30. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

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

31. Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy - Public Consultation Outcomes and Publication.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an overview of the findings of the public consultation undertaken on the draft Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and sought the Committee's views on the updated Strategy prior to this being presented to the Cabinet for approval at its meeting on 24 November 2023. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were arising:

- i) Members welcomed the new Strategy, which was timely in light of recent flood events in the area, and thanked officers for what was a thorough and comprehensive report.
- ii) The Committee supported the proposed partnership approach with communities. It was suggested that helping residents be flood aware was an effective way of managing future events and that the online platform which was currently being developed would be a useful point of information and guidance for residents of Leicestershire.
- iii) In 2020 a Scrutiny Review Panel had been established to look at the Council's approach to flooding in partnership with other strategic organisations. The Panel had made 26 recommendations and Members were pleased to hear that the Strategy had been developed to address the issues and areas of concern identified by the Panel.
- iv) A Member queried to what extent the impacts of future developments across the County and associated land drainage issues had been considered and how these would be managed/mitigated as part of the Strategy. The Director explained that as the Lead Local Flooding Authority the County Council had a role at a strategic and local level as a statutory consultee. If consulted by the local planning authority (district councils) it would be able to comment and make recommendations regarding flood risks both as part of the local plan process and in respect of individual developments at the planning application stage.
- v) A Member raised concerns regarding larger commercial developments which impacted surface water runoff and queried what could be done differently with commercial developers to address this. It was noted that as the Lead Local Flooding Authority the County Council was a statutory consultee for such developments in the same way as it was for residential developments.
- vi) A Member questioned the Council's response to public reports regarding blocked gullies, noting that these were cleaned on a scheduled basis, the timing of which might not seem appropriate when bad weather was on the horizon. The Director confirmed that whilst the Council had a timetable for cleaning gullies across the County, reports of a blockage in a flood risk area would be considered individually and action taken where appropriate. However, blocked gullies were often not necessarily the cause of flooding and other issues around the area could be

having an effect. The Member was asked to share details of a particular local concern regarding a blocked gully, which the Director undertook to look into further.

- vii) In response to a Members query, the Director confirmed that following a flood event, subject to certain criteria being met, an investigation would be carried out to determine the cause of the flood. As each case would be different the outcomes of each investigation would inform the solutions identified and this would be shared with partners for action.
- viii) A Member whose division had recently been affected by a flooding event highlighted the excellent work of the Flood Risk Management Team which had responded quickly, communicated well, and helped residents in recovering from the event.
- ix) The Committee thanked the Officers for the detailed and in-depth work undertaken to produce the report Strategy and for the work undertaken in responding to events. The Lead Member for Highways, Transportation and Flooding further commended the Flood Risk Management Team which he said was a small team that did an excellent job.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on the Leicestershire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Public Consultation Outcomes and Publication be noted and welcomed;
- b) That the comments now made by the Committee be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting in November 2023.

32. Street Lighting Review - Proposed Changes.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which detailed the outcome of the Street Lighting public consultation and proposed next steps for the Street Lighting review and sought the Committee's views on this to help shape the future Street Lighting offer prior to seeking approval from the Cabinet in December 2023. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were arose:

- i) The Committee questioned whether other options had been explored, such as switching off alternate lights rather than dimming all lights. A Member suggested that this might be considered more acceptable to residents, but also save more in energy costs. The Director advised that this suggestion had not been specifically considered, but the Council had explored several options which were in line with the Code of Practice and the need for a minimum level of light intensity in each area. The Director undertook to consider the suggested alternative approach as part of the consultation process.
- ii) A Member commented that the public's perception that switching off streetlights would result in an increase in crime was an interesting and delicate issue, as research suggested that, in fact, crime went down when streetlights were turned off. Members noted that the proposals were for streetlights to be dimmed, not turned off, and that the pilot would help determine if residents still had such

concerns in those circumstances.

- iii) A Member highlighted the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) mapping system which allowed the public to identify areas in Leicestershire where they felt most vulnerable. It was questioned to what extent the Council would take account of this information as part of its consultation. The Director confirmed that the pilot would help identify if and where residents felt more vulnerable or unsafe as a result of the dimmed lighting and suggested that a heat map could be developed to compare against the records held by the office of the PCC.
- iv) Members commented that the Council had a degree of social responsibility, especially in areas where elderly people lived and could feel isolated, or where there were particularly vulnerable communities. There might therefore be pockets where it would be appropriate to turn the lights back up to full brightness. It was noted that the pilot would help determine if this might be necessary.
- v) A Member raised concerns about the impact the proposals could have on two specific groups that had responded to the consultation raising concerns that the proposals would make them feel more vulnerable, namely women and those with a disability. It was noted that an Equalities Impact Assessment had been carried out but not attached to the report. Members requested and the Director undertook to provide a copy of this to all Members of the Committee. It was noted that this would also be attached to the future planned report to the Cabinet.
- vi) It was suggested that 8pm was not that late and some young people might be walking home from after school activities around that time. It was suggested that their views should be sought to understand what impact the proposed changes would have on them, noting that they would be unlikely to respond directly to the consultation.
- vii) Members questioned what could be done to make sure dimmed street lighting was not further reduced by tree coverage. The Director undertook to consider the matter further within the Department (which was also responsible for tree maintenance) should any such issues or concerns be raised as part of the pilot.
- viii) A Member queried if alternatives such as motion censored lights might be an option in the future. The Director advised that the current technology could not cope without significant investment.
- ix) It was noted that the dimming of streetlights to 30% [from 10pm on residential streets] was the current national British standard and that the Council was therefore just seeking to bring this forward to 8pm. Members further noted that the pilot would begin in February 2024 and would span over 2 winters to provide an accurate assessment of the scheme across the seasons.
- x) A Member commented that streetlights were largely for the benefit of pedestrians and cyclists. The Director reassured members that busier roads would continue to have lights on, including busy road junctions, but just at a dimmed level from 8pm. It was noted that additional work was also being done to understand foot fall levels in town centres and this data would be considered as part of the pilot process.
- xi) In response to Members query, it was noted that the pedestrianised footpath and cycle ways was an emerging area in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure

Plans (LCWIP) where data was being collected and monitoring equipment was also being introduced currently in the more urbanised areas, with an ambition for further developments.

The Lead Member for Highways and Transport took the opportunity to note that 30% was still a good level of light and suggested that LED lighting produced good light coverage. It was further noted that carrying out the pilot scheme would give the Authority a better understanding on how the proposed changes would work and where mitigation was needed.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the outcome of the Street Lighting public consultation and proposed next steps for the Street Lighting Review be noted;
- b) That the views and comments made by the Committee on the proposals be reported to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting in December 2023;
- c) That the Director be requested to provide Members of the Committee with a copy of the Equalities Impact Assessment carried out in respect of the proposed changes;
- d) That the Director be requested to:
 - (i) consider the suggestion of switching off alternate lights, instead of dimming all lights, to determine if this alternative approach might produce further positive outcomes and savings;
 - (ii) produce a heat map identifying those locations where people reported feeling vulnerable as a result of the reduced lighting and for this to be compared with data held by the office of the PCC;
 - (iii) to consider the impact of tree coverage which might further reduce lighting in some areas and to liaise with colleagues within the Department (which was also responsible for tree maintenance) should any such issues be raised as part of the pilot to see what work could be done to make improvements.

33. Passenger Transport Update.

The Committee considered a presentation provided by the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an update on funding arrangement for public transport services in Leicestershire, the work undertaken to refresh the Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy (PTPS) to support compliance with national policy, and to seek the Committees views on these and related work being undertaken prior to consideration by the Cabinet at its meeting in December. A copy of the slides marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points arose:

- i) Members welcomed the presentation and the additional grant funding for buses to be provided by the Department for Transport (DfT). Members queried the structure of the funding and how this could be allocated. It was noted that the first tranche of £4.05m would be revenue funding but that it was expected the multi

years settlement in future years, a proportion of which was expected to be capital.

- ii) A Member questioned how the funds might be used to support local commercial bus operators. It was noted that there were conditions attached to the funding and it was not intended to simply fund the continuation of existing services. Some additionalities would need to be demonstrated and where money was transported to commercial operators by way of a subsidy, which was permitted if it could be shown to be for the public benefit, then strict legal and procurement processes would need to be followed.
- iii) Whilst there continued to be drop in the usage of bus services since the Covid 19 pandemic it was noted that some routes had recovered, for example those that traditionally had large patronage (usually student) numbers, whilst others had not and might never do so. Members noted that service recovery was dependent on who was using the bus routes. Around 80% of routes had recovered but concessionary travel was much lower which meant those areas more reliant on such travel was continuing to struggle.
- iv) Members raised concerns regarding engagement by bus companies in recent times and asked how this might be improved under the new Strategy to provide for a more partnership approach. A Member commented that whilst bus companies were operating a commercial service it needed to be acknowledged that this was also a public service and that some engagement when changes were being made or routes ended would be beneficial for residents. It was suggested that the injection of additional funds and the structure around how this could be spent would act as a catalyst for improving engagement. Officers would also be meeting with operators to discuss the new Strategy and their input would be considered as this was developed.
- v) Reliability and capacity were key issues in some areas. It would be important to engage with operators not just in respect of those routes that were no longer viable, but to increase capacity and connections on busier routes. The Director provided reassurance that focus was being given to the development of a core commercial offer that would drive such improvements and could also be supported by the increased grant funding allocated where appropriate.
- vi) A Member commented that more consideration needed to be given to the accessibility of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT). Whilst an excellent offer it was suggested that this was not adequately joined up and so did not improve connectivity across the County. The service was also reliant on residents having a smart phone to be able to make a booking online via an application. As different providers operated on different applications, this also acted as a barrier to establishing a fully joined up service.
- vii) Members suggested that partnership work between bus operators and railway ticketing stations to provide an integrated service would be beneficial for the future. It was noted that this would be a commercial decision for bus operators and train companies not the local authority.
- viii) Members were reassured that the new DfT funding provided a new opportunity to reflect on and discuss with bus companies what services would be appropriate and how to provide better local coverage. For example, whether a service should be replaced by a DRT service, or if a reduction in bus size would make a commercial

route more affordable, possibly with a small subsidy by the Council, where passenger numbers were low, and the route was otherwise at risk of being declared unviable.

- ix) It was noted that partnership work with the City Council was ongoing for other sources of funding such as the ZEBRA funding which it had already been successful in achieving. In response to Members query whether bus charging capacity was included the assistant Director confirmed that charging infrastructure would be part of the assessment.

The Lead Member for Highways and Transport took the opportunity to thank the Officers for their ongoing work in this area. The additional funding would be beneficial, but it was disappointing that the Government required this to be spent within such a short timescale.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the presentation on the Passenger Transport Update be noted;
- b) That the views and comments from the Committee on the proposed approach be duly reported to the Cabinet.
- c) That the Director be requested to circulate the presentation to the district and parish councils for information to local people.

34. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 18th January 2024 at 2.00 pm.

35. Any other items which the Chairman has decided to take as urgent.

The Chairman informed the meeting there were no urgent items to be taken.

2.00pm to 3.50pm
9 November 2023

CHAIRMAN