

Minutes of a meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 16 January 2025.

PRESENT

Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC (in the Chair)

Mr. R. G. Allen CC
Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC
Mr. M. Frisby CC

Mrs. H. J. Fryer CC
Mr. J. Miah CC
Mr. L. Phillimore CC

In attendance

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

37. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November were taken as read, confirmed and signed subject to an amendment to the reply to Mr Bret Jackson's supplementary question (question 14 at minute 26) to include specific reference to the pipe being referred to in light of comments received from the Stoney Stanton Flood Action Group. The relevant minute to now read as follows:

'At the request of the Chairman, the Director of Environment and Transport responded that, this had been raised again with the technical expert who was carrying out the re-modelling study about the particular pipe referred to and he had suggested that this was being taken into account. Additionally, the ponds issue referenced, were also being considered as to how they could best be utilised and enhanced as part of the flood scheme. It was noted that in respect of the decision of the local planning authority, as suggested previously, no action would or could be taken against the local planning authorities decision but the County Council had taken on board what had happened and was working with partners to see how the situation could be improved going forward.'

38. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that a number of questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

Question asked by a member of the public regarding flooding in Sileby and Cossington in 2024.

"Please would you be able to update on the specific actions that LCC have taken to reduce flooding on back of the flooding that occurred on 2 January 2024 which effected residents across Leicestershire and specifically Sileby and Cossington

With Leicestershire again being hit with devastating floods on the 6 Jan 2025 what actions are you putting in place so this event doesn't repeat for a third year in a row."

Reply by the Chairman

“As you have alluded to, the County has been significantly impacted by the floods on 6 January, with over 600 properties being internally flooded across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

The Council is aware that Sileby and Cossington were two of the many communities impacted by this event as they were a year ago during Storm Henk and we fully sympathise with those who have been affected.

Flooding can come from a range of different sources and there are many different responsible bodies, organisations or individuals and flood risk management requires a partnership approach between agencies and the community, as detailed in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding-and-drainage/flood-risk-management.

In its role as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), as the Council did and continues to do following Storm Henk, the Council will collate information from those flooded to aid investigation and understand what happened in more detail. Please report any incidences to the Council's flooding@leics.gov.uk mailbox. As with Storm Henk, and also Storm Babet a few months prior, the high volumes of impacted communities across the County has generated a significant amount of investigative work for the Council's Flood Risk Management team, which will take some time to get through.

As such, there is still investigative work to do following Storm Henk and clearly there will be more following events this month, but actions taken so far include:-

- Seven public drop-in sessions being held throughout Leicestershire, including in Loughborough and County Hall, where all of the responsible agencies were represented to allow any member of the public to discuss any flooding concerns and to also learn how they could become flood ready.
- The assessment of a potential bridge removal at Cygnet Close, Sileby in partnership with the Environment Agency. This will take time including modelling and review of output to ensure that removal does not exacerbate flooding and creates betterment and then identifying and securing funding.
- The identification of works required to a Severn Trent Water sewer in Cossington.
- The administration of the £5,000 Property Flood Resilience Repair Grants on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. Some property owners in Cossington and Sileby have been able to benefit from these grants. There is still time for residents whose properties were flooded during Storms Babet or Henk to apply for this grant at the following link: www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding-and-drainage/property-flood-resilience-repair-grant.
- The promotion, recruitment and training of local flood wardens to help promote local resilience.

While there is work to do to understand the impacts and what happened during the latest event in more detail, what the Council is aware of is that there was a prolonged and intense level of rainfall, compounded by snow melt on the already saturated, and also in some places, frozen ground. This led to the highest ever river levels being recorded (Storm Henk being the second highest recorded), which subsequently overwhelmed tributary watercourses and other drainage systems.

Unfortunately, with Sileby and Cossington being in close proximity to the River Soar, both communities will continue to be at risk, particularly during events of that magnitude. Ultimately, it is not possible to guarantee there will not be a repeat event in the next 12 months.

While, in its role as the LLFA, the Council will do everything within its powers and work with other agencies to identify the cause and any potential preventative solutions (as the Council have already done so, as illustrated above), the stark reality is that there may not be a viable long-term solution that eliminates the risk of flooding for all residents, so the Council encourages residents to 'Be Flood Ready', know their flood risk, and work to make their properties more resilient by installing protection measures".

www.leicestershire.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/flooding-and-drainage/prepare-for-flooding.

Secondly, there were a number of questions from the Stoney Stanton Flood Action Group which related to the questions and replies given to local residents in Stoney Stanton at the meeting of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 November 2024. Although not usual practice, due to the strength of feeling from the local residents of Stoney Stanton the Chairman accepted the questions but agreed with Officers that regrettably the questions submitted were not able to be answered in advance of the meeting. Officers had been working on an update in relation to work in Stoney Stanton and the Flood Action Group have therefore been provided with a position statement on the ongoing situation in Stoney Stanton and Officers would endeavour to answer any questions not specifically addressed in the position Statement in writing in six weeks where possible."

Questions asked by the Stoney Stanton Flood Action Group

The Chairman reported that a number of questions had been received from the Stoney Stanton Flood Action Group (SSFAG) which related to the questions and replies given to local residents in Stoney Stanton at the last Committee meeting held in November 2024.

The Chairman emphasised that it wasn't the Council's usual process to allow questions similar to any raised in the previous six months. However, due to the strength of feeling of residents and the SSFAG he had agreed to allow these, copies of which had been shared with all members of the Committee. The Chairman asked the SSFAG, however, if submitting any more questions in the future to ensure these did not include lengthy background material and context and that they raised new issues.

In response to the questions raised, the Chairman commented that as there had been significant flooding across the County in recent weeks the Flooding Team had needed to respond to this current emergency as an urgent priority. He had therefore agreed with officers that regrettably he would not be able to answer the questions submitted in advance of the meeting. Officers were already working on an update in relation to work in Stoney Stanton and the Flood Action Group had therefore been provided with a copy of the position statement regarding the ongoing situation in Stoney Stanton, a copy of which was filed with these minutes.

A copy of the questions raised and this position statement had been shared with all members of the Committee and published on the Council's website and Members had also received copies of some photographs that the SSFAG had provided in support of

their additional questions, though in accordance with the Council's usual practice these would not be published on the website.

The Chairman advised that officers would endeavour to answer any individual questions which were not specifically addressed in the position statement in writing in six weeks, where possible and that these would be shared with Committee members and published on the Councils website in due course.

At this point in the meeting, although not usually permitted, the Chairman allowed Mrs Elizabeth Perry, a representative of the Stoney Stanton Flood Action Group, to make the following brief statement:

"We had very little notice that we would be able to do this so I am going to have to read this from my notes. I want to talk about a short summary we have created about the current situation we find ourselves in. In 1992 several of the Mount Sorrell Cottages that's number 13 to 22 flooded, as flood alleviation a pipe was installed by the Council from the access road between the cottages into the flood plain which worked perfectly well until the Bellway Housing development. Numerous planning applications were made to Blaby District Council over a number of years which were rejected on recommendation from the Environment Agency because of flooding and opposed by the residents who had long standing knowledge of the enormous volume of water the flood plain held. On the last application, Blaby District Council approached the Environment agency who said they were no longer a consultee, this was now the role of the LLFA. Please refer to the previous reports, the LLFA were unable to make specific recommendations at the time due to their lack of expertise without approval Blaby granted permission to Bellway Developers. Residents were assured that everything had been accounted for in the modelling and Bellway were putting in adequate measures including attenuation ponds to make sure we wouldn't flood. These measures have been insufficient as in October 2019 35 properties flooded in Stoney Stanton and were it not for the resilience of the residents would have flooded several times more since. Again, on 6 January 2025 the ongoing issues were apparent at residents were on flood watch from 4am and pumping water for most of the day. After the floods of 2019, there were investigations which showed that the pipe that had been placed in 1990 had been capped by Bellway contractors. This pipe has been described in the Section 19 report as misconnected. Everyone knows that this pipe is a major factor of flooding and we are perplexed as why the LLFA continue to cover up the fact.

We flooded again on the 6 January 2025 and submitted questions to the Scrutiny Committee on 8 January 2025 and an Officer from the County Council made an unannounced visit on 9 January 2025. At that time one of the residents who had lived in the cottages for over 50 years spoke to the Officer about residents' concerns and residents want to know what the Officers from either Blaby district council or LCC are aware of as residents feel that their voices are not being heard and issues addressed. We appreciate there has been a lot of flooding across the County but the issue in Stoney Stanton is man-made and preventable. Residents feel there is a disconnect between the local residents and the Council with the LLFA focussed on a long term multi million pound scheme focussed on future developments and not existing issues. There are numerous problems with drainage pipes and riparian owner responsibilities in Stressline identified in the Section 19 report of the 2019 flood which remains unaddressed. This report itself was inaccurate as was the modelling used in the planning of the Bellway development on a flood plain.

Other repeated issues from the 6 January are the unknown water source, Stressline, riparian issues Boundary Farm and Robertson Close.

In conclusion, we would be grateful now you have heard the background information if Members of the Committee can study the SSFAG analysis from the last meeting in November when only one of our 16 questions were addressed and we would like to take the opportunity to invite members of the Committee on a site visit to see our issues for yourself.”

39. 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).

40. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

41. 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.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

43. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

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

44. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 28/29.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Director of Environment and Transport and the Director of Corporate Resources which provided information on the proposed 2025/26 to 2028/29 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as it related to the Highways and Transport side of the Environment and Transport department. A copy of the report marked ‘Agenda Item ‘8’ is filed with these minutes.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. O. O’Shea CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Highways and Transport, to the meeting for this item.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

Growth

- (i) Street lighting reactive maintenance jobs had increased by 257% since 2022/23 due to aged assets. Aged Assets referred to columns and cables that had a life expectancy and needed maintaining. Members queried whether any scoping

exercises had been carried out to see if alternative sources of power could be utilised which were more sustainable. In response, Officers explained that the current approach was to switch to LED lighting and that replacement programme was underway on what was a large scale. Assets needed to be reliable and alternative sources were taken on board as the technology improved over time.

SEN Transport

- (ii) Assisted Transport was a significant part of the department's budget due to many factors and the spend on it was continuing to increase. A member acknowledged that the money needed to be spent and forecasts and provision for the future needed to be made. However, Members suggested that as this was an issue affecting local authorities across the country it should be addressed nationally by government.
- (iii) The Council had a statutory duty to deliver the SEN Transport service and the department's growth would continue to be dominated by increased demand for SEN Transport. Members noted that the Council was able to increase the Adult Social Care precept by 2% without requiring a referendum and submitted that until the government addressed the SEN Transport issue nationally the County Council would have to keep increasing the precept by the maximum amount each year.

Savings

- (iv) A Member raised concerns about a lack of lighting in urban areas and suggested whether increasing the amount of lighting was a cost worth paying. In response it was explained that a substantial saving had been made as a result of dimming street lighting and the saving would have to be made elsewhere were it not made from street lighting, but The department was aware that dimmed street lighting might not be suitable for all areas and would take feedback from the ongoing pilot scheme and address the concerns where necessary.
- (v) As many electric vehicles were heavier than other vehicles on the road network due to the weight of the battery, Members queried whether this resulted in more deterioration of the roads. In response it was acknowledged that there had been an acceleration in deterioration on the strategic network in recent years and that there were many factors that impacted this such as weather. The fact that EV's were heavier and heavier vehicles had an impact on the road network was an area that would need addressing nationally.
- (vi) Members raised concerns regarding high volumes of traffic around Junction 21 of the M1. It was suggested that the government's requirements of local authorities to increase housing growth should come with additional investment in the transport infrastructure as the existing road networks would not be able to cope with additional growth.

Capital Programme

- (vii) In response to a Member query about the Zouch Bridge highlighted in the report it was noted that the bridge had been identified as an asset that needed maintaining as it was a key link on the strategic network and that work was nearing completion which members welcomed.

- (viii) A member raised concerns regarding maintenance of the existing Highways network. Some maintenance had originally been planned to be funded through the Network North funding but this had now been cancelled. As promised and monies that had already been used to carry out some of the maintenance would now be accounted for in multi-year settlements over the period of the MTFS. It was noted that this highlighted the need for maintenance with the department making the best use of the funds and managing the risks attached to this as a result of the uncertainty in funding.
- (ix) The amount of future contributions to be received by the department from developers under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 were hard to predict so could not yet be allocated in the budget until confirmation was received. However, upcoming Section 106 funding was closely monitored to maximise the use of the funding.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 -2028/29 be noted;
- b) That the comments now made be forwarded to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration at its meeting on 27 January 2025.

45. Update on Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Projects.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport, the purpose of which was to provide an update on Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Projects. A copy of the report marked 'agenda item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion the following points were made:

- i) In line with the Council's Environment and Net Zero Strategies, the Department's was seeking to move its operations towards net zero. In line with current intelligence from industry and the technology available the Department was currently planning the upgrade of its infrastructure to support electric vehicles which the Department was working towards converting to. It was noted that in future it would be possible that new technologies would become available and the Department was aware of the need to be ready to consider all opportunities such as hydrogen energy to power its heavy fleet if this became feasible and appropriate.
- ii) A member suggested that developers should have the responsibility of installing electric vehicle charging points and solar panels to roofs on new developments, as this would be an ideal opportunity to prepare for the future.
- iii) Members noted that the County Council would fund the installation of Electric Vehicle infrastructure through grant funding and that contracts would be managed as part of a consortium with other local authorities. The charge points themselves would be operated and maintained by the commercial charge point operator. It was acknowledged that the pilot project underway would help identify risks, but that in any event the infrastructure itself would need to be well maintained.

- iv) It was noted that the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure scheme pilot for which the Council had secured external grant funding, had helped to kick start the delivery of infrastructure for electric vehicles, providing for a number of public charging points to be installed across Leicestershire. Members noted that those using the charge points would pay a fee which paid for the energy consumed.
- v) A Member noted that Blaby District Council had delivered a similar project to install charge points across Blaby and that a service provider had now been put in place to continue the scheme. The Member suggested that this model had worked well and was a good programme for encouraging behaviour change.
- vi) In response to a Member's concerns regarding blackouts on the grid, it was noted that discussions had taken place with energy suppliers and that the choice of location for charging points would be driven by energy capacity. If there was insufficient power, there would be a risk of blackouts on the grid and this was therefore acknowledged on the Departmental risk register.

AGREED:

That the update report on the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Projects be noted.

46. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 6 March 2025 at 2.00pm.

2.00pm – 4.11pm
16 January 2025

CHAIRMAN