

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
HIGHWAYS FORUM FOR HARBOROUGH
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AT HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL ON
TUESDAY 25TH OCTOBER 2016 AT 4.30PM

PRESENT

County Councillors	District Councillors
Cllr G A Hart (Chairman)	Cllr S Bilbie
Cllr R K A Feltham	Cllr C Holyoak
Cllr S J Galton	Cllr M Rickman
Cllr R Page	Cllr A Burrell
Cllr B L Pain	Cllr R Hadkiss

The following also attended the meeting:

County officers present: T Kirk and L Bennett

District officers present: N Proudfoot

186. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members, officers and members of the public to the meeting.

187. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor Liquorish and District Councillors Hall, Hammond and Nunn

188. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

189. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

190. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 26th July 2016 were confirmed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

The Chairman advised that he would take item 8 before item 6 (Chairman's update)

191. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

RESPONSIBILITIES UNDERTAKEN BY LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AS THE LEAD LOCAL FLOOD AUTHORITY

The Forum considered a report by the Director of Environment and Transport providing an update of the responsibilities undertaken by Leicestershire County Council (LCC) as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The update was introduced by Mr Kirk.

Mr Kirk stated that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the roles and responsibilities of the LLFA and the water utility companies (Severn Trent Water & Anglian Water) and in some cases the Environment Agency (EA).

Mr Kirk explained that the LLFA is responsible for the investigation of incidents for ordinary watercourses not main rivers which are the EA's responsibility. As part of the investigation the LLFA should identify the reason for the incident, who the responsible parties are and work with all those responsible to develop and implement a resolution. The LLFA however does not have the statutory duty or the money to enforce and deliver the solution, it must work with the responsible parties to bid for money where appropriate from the EA and to negotiate / facilitate implementation.

Mr Kirk added that the LLFA has the responsibility of commenting on drainage designs in all new building developments over 10 house and responds to the planning authority regarding this as part of the planning application process.

Mr Kirk advised that he was happy to answer questions.

Cllr S Bilbie requested that Kiliby Road Fleckney be investigated as it floods regularly when there is heavy rain and a number of properties drives are underwater.

Mr Kirk advised that he would get back to him directly and copy in the other relevant Cllrs.

Cllr B Pain thanked Mr Kirk for the report and asked for a point of clarification on page 16 which refers to "Section 11 relating to highways drainage maintenance".

Mr Kirk advised that it should have read "Section 12 relating to highways drainage maintenance" Mr Kirk stated that to support the drainage programme LCC operated six gully emptying machines, four of which are for planned maintenance and two for reactive.

Cllr B Pain expressed is disappointment that despite evidence having been sent into LCC regarding Lubenham the individual instances of flooding he had raised have not been included within the report. Cllr B Pain requested that he receive assurances that these instances have been or will be investigated.

Mr Kirk confirmed that he would seek assurances and respond to Cllr B Pain.

Cllr Galton stated that he did not feel this report covered all the instances of flooding as it does not cover the Bank Holiday period after June which was particularly bad.

Cllr Galton expressed disappointment that the Director or someone able to comment specifically on flooding issues were not here to present the report and stated that he believed the main problem was Severn Trent's response to the issues.

Cllr Galton asked what the Forum's options were regarding engaging with Severn Trent and what powers LCC as the LLFA had over water companies; stating that as he believed the issues would only be solved by a large capital investment from Severn Trent and without this they would be unlikely to respond in a positive and timely manner.

Cllr Galton stated that he believed the issue was that there was not enough capacity within sewers given the new housing developments and the fact no upgrades were taking place.

The Chairman observed that a problem with Market Harborough town centre 7 years ago was only addressed when the Director of Anglian Water was asked to come to the District Council. On this basis he believes the Director of Severn Trent should be asked to attend a meeting of the Forum.

Cllr B Pain suggested that he should be asked to attend a Scrutiny Committee Meeting.

Mr Kirk stated that the LLFA can only negotiate with the Water Companies they have no powers of enforcement and that he would speak to the relevant senior officers and advise of the most appropriate way forward.

The Chairman suggested that a meeting with the Environment and Transport Director should take place.

Cllr C Holyoak stated that it was vitally important that LCC use the opportunity as the LLFA to draw attention to any drainage issues within the planning applications for 10 houses or more and that the water companies should be held to account.

Cllr R Feltham drew attention to issues in Tur Langton where on the site of the former Black Bull Pub, seven houses had been built, following which flooding on the street now occurs.

Cllr R Page clarified the fact that neither the LLFA nor the Environment Agency have any powers over Severn Trent and that despite this fact officers from LCC have been working with both to put schemes together and bid for funding to implement solutions. Cllr Page stated that Severn Trent had originally refused to engage with them and it was only when someone from the water company joined the Environment Agency at a senior level was a way in found.

Discussion took place regarding the technical restrictions on the current drainage infrastructure.

Cllr B Pain stated that the role of the LLFA was clear and asked whether the officers involved with the funding bids felt frustrated that their work was not being taken seriously and how many of the bids were accepted and funding secured.

Cllr R Page confirmed that she received a list showing the successful bids and that up until recently this list was divided into two parts, the City and the County. Cllr R Page stated that a high proportion of the successful bids were within the City boundaries.

Cllr M Rickman requested that flooding incidents at the cross roads in Medbourne and Brook Lane in Great Easton be added to the list.

Mr Kirk reported that since the restructure of the Department the capacity of the flood team is beginning to increase and requested that details of individual flooding incidents be sent to flooding@leics.gov.uk, including photographs if possible.

Cllr R Page requested clarification on whether this paper covered the whole of Leicestershire or whether it was specific to the Harborough area.

Mr Kirk confirmed that the report was specific to the Harborough area.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report of the Director of Environment and Transport be noted.

That Mr Kirk discuss with the Director the options regarding inviting the Director of Severn Trent to talk to the Forum.

192. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 36

A petition with 58 signatures from Mrs Passingham will be presented by Mrs Passingham and Cllr B Johnson. The petition requests that the Knoll Street route be reinstated on the number 33 bus route in Market Harborough.

The Chairman asked Mrs Passingham and Cllr B Johnson to speak in support of his petition.

Mrs Passingham described how the route has changed, travelling down Highcross Street and missing Knoll Street completely resulting in residents having to walk an additional distance to Northleigh Grove which involves crossing Norbury Close.

Mrs Passingham explained that the change of route is causing a great deal of difficulty and distress for those who have previously used the service from Knoll Street especially the elderly and individuals with mobility issues; resulting in at least one incident involving a fall.

Mrs Passingham requested that the service to be reverted to the original route.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Passingham and asked Cllr B Johnson to summarise the other residents views.

Cllr B Johnson expressed her support for the petition and recognised that whilst at this stage it may not be possible to know the outcome of the petition she was grateful that the residents had been allowed to show their support for the petition.

Cllr B Johnson described that before the route was changed it was clearly well patronised and regularly used by residents. Explaining that Knoll Street has around a third more residents than Highcross Street and in particular many residents who traditionally rely on this service to get about and how it is neither safe nor easy for the elderly and those with disabilities to reach the present pick – up points, citing that an incident had already taken place where someone with visual disabilities had fallen.

Cllr B Johnson explained how the original route did not present any noticeable difficulties for the bus drivers and that Knoll Street is slightly wider than the other streets and considerate parking along its length allows ease of progress, there is also an easy turn at the end of the street into Gardiner Street, which is part of the original route and easy to negotiate with only light parking.

Cllr B Johnson stated that in comparison the present route can be a nightmare for bus drivers to negotiate as in Logan Street parking on both sides of the road has become the norm and the road is often lined nose to tail with parked vehicles on both sides throughout the day. Describing how in the previous week the driver of the no. 33 bus on which she was travelling successfully negotiated the section of the street which is part of the bus route but with only a “cat’s whisker” between the wing mirrors and that sometimes access is impossible. Explaining that residents in this street often complain to her about the traffic and that minor scrapes to vehicles are not uncommon.

Cllr B Johnson advised that when the Logan Street route is blocked bus drivers use Knoll Street and that the turn from Logan Street into Highcross Street can be another challenge due to cars parked close to the junction.

In conclusion Cllr B Johnson requested that as a bus service should serve its customers first and foremost, being consistently reliable and safe with an eye to maintaining revenue, that bus no.33 be returned to its original route.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Passingham and Cllr B Johnson for presenting the petition.

Cllr B Pain stated that it would have been preferable had this been discussed with officers of LCC prior to the petition which may have then been avoided, however it was acknowledged that it was positive that the community had engaged with the Forum over this issue.

Cllr B Pain explained that this is a commercial route and that the bus operator can choose the route it uses and providing the Traffic Commissioner agrees LCC cannot enforce a change; however as LCC subsidises this route they may have a degree influence. Cllr B Pain stated that the real issue in question was to do with parking and traffic and that there was no easy solution.

Cllr S Galton requested clarification on whether the route is purely commercial or subsidised.

Mr Kirk advised that the route currently receives the minimum subsidy and that it does have a commercial basis.

Mr Kirk explained that initial investigation shows that the bus company has been operating against the registered route by using Knoll Street and the actual route agreed by the Traffic Commissioner is the one that they are now using which the residents wish to change.

Mr Kirk advised that a change to a registered route needs to follow a defined process involving giving 56 days notice.

Cllr R Page asked for clarification regarding what the next steps are.

Mr Kirk advised that the next steps will be to survey the preferred route, talk to traffic management officers, discuss the proposed change with the bus company and then if all agreed advertise the change in route as defined within the legal process. In this case the changed route would be to use Knoll Street.

The Chairman thanked all those who spoke on the petition and advised that the issue would be investigated further and a response brought back to the next meeting.

193. REPONSE TO PETITION: REQUEST TO CHANGE THE BUS ROUTE THROUGH THE KIBWORTH MEADOWS ESTATE

Mr Kirk presented the report of the Director of Environment and Transport in response to the petition to change the bus routes going through the Kibworth Meadows Estate.

Mr Kirk advised that the recommendation of the response were that the service continues to serve the estate on the current route.

Cllr R Feltham stated that he was very disappointed with the recommendation especially with regard to the large number of signatories on the petition against the current arrangements. Cllr R Feltham also stated that he would have been happier if a risk assessment had been made of the impact the bus route had on the safety of the children playing at the play area adjacent to the route.

Mr Kirk responded that the new development of the business park may change the nature of the issue and bring with it some section 106 monies.

Cllr R Feltham also advised that residents in the development off the main road did not know about the buses and were not aware of the travel packs which should have been provided; concern was expressed that potentially the developers had not been carrying out their responsibilities.

Cllr C Christoforou of Kibworth Harcourt Parish Council described how the speed limits on the Wistow and Warwick Roads have been modified and increased by the developer to 40 miles per hour. The safety issues around not routing buses in this direction maybe partly addressed if the speed limits were returned to 30 miles per hour.

Cllr C Christoforou acknowledged that the bus company was making some effort and had modified the timetables to ensure that double decker buses do not meet on the route, however parking on the road remains and buses are continuing to get stuck and subsequently reversing, which is not safe, it is feared that the proposed speed table will make this worse.

Cllr C Christoforou queried whether using double deckers during peak periods and single deckers during the middle of the day may be possible.

Cllr C Christoforou stated that an issue with privacy was being raised as bus stops were being used early in the mornings around 06:30 as a bus stand, with the engine left running, this also causes safety issues as the stop is near a junction.

Cllr C Holyoak stated that the buses cannot pass safely on Fleckney Road, nearly running people over and that one of the issues was that the properties did not have enough parking available to them.

Mr Kirk advised that he would take the comments back as the bus company clearly needs to be made aware of this.

Cllr Feltham raised the issue that he had recently seen buses breaking down on a regular basis.

Mr Kirk advised that whilst the original stock of buses were refurbishment the company were looking at major investment in their stock and recognise that it is not what it could be.

194. MANAGEMENT OF HIGHWAY DRAINAGE

The Forum considered a report by the Director of Environment and Transport on the management of Highway Drainage.

Mr Kirk took Members through the report and provided an overview of the current approach to the management of highway drainage across the county.

The Chairman raised the issue of catch pots being full when coming out of the village on the A426 at Cotesbatch.

Cllr R Page stated that whilst however disappointing some of this reads it should be recognised that there have been recent improvements and the teams have exceeded their targets.

Cllr S Galton stated that despite the financial restrictions it cannot be right to not undertake work that will prevent flooding. Cllr S Galton also queries why on some occasions there appears to be instances that work is not carried out for a variety of reasons but then not followed up, including an instance where a "tag" was on a gully for over a year.

Mr Kirk said he would take back the concerns regarding the tagged gully to the relevant officer and the overall process around follow ups may need to be addressed and improved. Mr Kirk advised that the service is keen to be improving communications and will be putting an article out in the Parish newsletter that will clarify what to do where there are flooding instances.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report of the Director of Environment and Transport be noted.

195. NATIONAL HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT (NHT) PUBLIC AND PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVE SURVEYS

The Forum considered a report by the Director of Environment and Transport on the National Highways & Transport (NHT) Surveys.

Mr Kirk took Members through the report and provided an overview of the results of the 2015 National Highways and Transport Survey of both public and members.

Cllr R Page asked for clarification on what the purpose of the report is.

Mr Kirk advised that it was important to understand how we are performing and what our customers value in order to be able to identify what we should be doing in the future and help officers plan the services going forward.

The Chairman stated that it was important to see what customers want and thought the report provided valuable information.

196. 2016/17 MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAMMES – INFORMATION ITEM

Members noted the report.

197. PROGRAMME OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT WORK – CURRENT POSITION – INFORMATION ITEM

Members noted the report.

198. ON-GOING ACTION STATEMENT

The ongoing action was noted.

199. ITEMS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

The Chairman asked Members to let officers have in writing any items for consideration for future agendas within 10 days of the date of the meeting. These items can be sent to Sue Dann, email sue.dann@leics.gov.uk.

200. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

201. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Chairman confirmed the date of the next meeting is:

28th February 2017

All meetings are to start at 4.30pm and will be held in the Council Chamber at Harborough District Council offices.

The Chairman asked Members to make a note of the date.

202. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chairman thanked Members and officers for their attendance and contribution at the meeting.

This page is intentionally left blank