

ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 3 JUNE 2021

The following questions were received from Mr. M Hunt CC

1. **“Funding for road maintenance**

At our last meeting we were told that our present level of funding from Government was not adequate to maintain our road network and from 2009/10 we have had no inflationary increases leading, in effect, to an notional reduction of £10million a year for maintenance funding. To what extent as this been mitigated by risk-based asset management?”

Response by the Chairman:

An increased focus on risk-based asset management has allowed us to better prioritise the available funding on both reactive safety maintenance and longer-term preventative maintenance but spend is still skewed towards reactive short-term maintenance. The reduction in funding over the years has meant we have had to modify the types of treatments that we carry out, to minimise the increasing severity of the road defects, to ensure that roads are in a safe condition for motorists. However, this is not sufficient to address the deteriorating condition of the assets and a substantial increase in capital investment is still needed to address the decline.

2. **“The Passenger Transport Policy & Strategy Oct 2018**

For two years I have been trying to get a bus shelter for residents of Shapley Road, Loughborough which is a deprived area of the town with low access to private cars and consequent high dependence on buses for trips to essential services.

Having no Parish Council, the District Council previously supplied bus shelters under the local Agency agreement with the County Council but can no longer provide these. In their reply I was quoted the County **Passenger Transport Policy & Strategy** (Oct 2018) which states that (11.1) *Leicestershire County Council will continue to provide and maintain infrastructure that facilitates passenger transport use, in cooperation with operators where appropriate. This includes bus stop poles/flags and shelters, information display case sat stops, and interchange facilities. Selection of locations for any new bus stops and shelters will follow good practice and will particularly consider accessibility for people with impaired mobility.*

On application to the County Council it appears that there are no consistent criteria and the application was duly rejected, despite the additional need required by nearby accommodation being completed for sheltered LCC accommodation for adults. On further enquiry it appears that the County Council receives very few applications all of which are refused or put on a list for indefinite review. On further investigation, other good county transport authorities appear to recognise a corporate responsibility to provide bus shelters rather than lower tier authorities

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1. What are the criteria, if any, for approving applications for bus shelters and what is the relevant appeal procedure?

Response by the Chairman

Where there is no third-party funding, requests for bus shelters are considered on a case by case basis, taking in to account factors such as frequency, usage and locality. Currently, the County Council does not have a defined criteria for the level of usage, and use officer's knowledge and experience to determine such requests. Officers recognise this approach requires a review and going forward it is intended to work towards developing a clear policy for bus shelter requests. Staff resources permitting this work will be underway soon. If new or additional information is provided relating to a previous shelter request, then this can be reassessed.

2. What reviews take place to remove shelters that are no longer on bus routes or do not meet the criteria?

Response

Once shelters are installed, we do not monitor usage and we would only look to remove them in extenuating circumstances as the cost to remove shelters is far greater than the ongoing cleaning and maintenance costs. In addition to this, the bus network is subject to change and where operators reinstate services, a stop may once again come back in to use.

3. What Section 106 applications for public transport infrastructure (notably bus stops and shelters) were made for the Sustainable Urban Extensions at Lubbers Thorpe, Thorpebury/NE Leicester and West of Loughborough?

Response

West of Loughborough SUE – There is an obligation on the developer to submit a Public Transport Strategy that would contain the detail of public transport provision. The planning application requires the applicant to ensure that within the development, dwellings are generally within 400 metres of a stop and that these are to be comprised of raised kerbs, timetable information, shelters, and Real Time Information. There is also written in to the S106 agreement a requirement for a contribution of £15,896 towards bus stop improvements at the two nearest stops on the A512.

Thorpebury/NE Leicester – A condition on the Outline Planning Permission application requires each Reserved Matters applications for this site, to include details of bus stops (at a maximum walking distance of 400m from each dwelling), and each to comprise of shelters, RTPI, raised kerbs, timetable information, lighting.

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Lubbesthorpe - The Public Transport conditions attached to the public transport element stated that there should be bus stops located within the development, however, the public transport strategy was revised in November 2018 to reflect a new demand led service and therefore fixed stops were not required. This service is known as 'Arriva Click' and operates using virtual stopping points with no fixed route.

4. What bus services are planned for these SUEs?

Response

West of Loughborough SUE – see response for Q3 – however, Highways comments submitted in response to the planning application, referenced phased provision of a bus service from first occupation at a 30 minute frequency between the site and the town centre between 07:00 and 19:00 Monday to Saturday; hourly Sundays and evenings.

Thorpebury/NE Leicester – The S106 agreement stipulates that a Bus Service Scheme must be submitted and approved in consultation with the County and City Councils. The agreement also references a Bus Strategy, with proposals on how the bus service might be delivered diverting existing services.

Lubbesthorpe - Arriva Click was launched in April 2019, providing a demand led public transport solution covering the site as well a wider geographic area.

5. Basic Public transport infrastructure requires little investment in comparison to roads. Why is this not given the priority of other assets under this authority?"

Response

Leicestershire County Council assesses and reviews requests for bus shelters as they are submitted and also secures public transport infrastructure through the planning process. Through the recently launched National Bus Strategy, public transport infrastructure will be central to improving and enhancing bus travel, therefore going forward consideration and prioritisation will be given to this area.

The following supplementary questions were received from Mr. M Hunt CC

Can the Chairman clarify whether the determining factors in awarding a community a bus shelter include the following in regards to the 'frequency, usage and locality' set out within the answer ;

- i) the level of car ownership in an area,
- ii) usage and whether this is measured by peak usage, or averaged across a week, or per bus;
- iii) frequency of service demand such that a shelter is more likely to be provided for say a half hour service than an hourly service;

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iv) the knowledge of the particular officer.

v)

and whether the relevant scores for these determining factors are recorded?"

Response by the Chairman:

- i) This factor is not currently considered. However, in areas of lower car ownership we would expect to see increased bus usage which is taken in to account.
- ii) Analysis of usage is based on an average. The changing passenger numbers during the pandemic have been considered and where appropriate pre-pandemic data is reviewed too.
- iii) This factor is taken into account as a higher frequency would point to there being higher usage.
- iv) Experienced officers make the assessment and use their knowledge of the network and carefully consider requests based on frequency, usage and locality. As there is no defined scoring criteria to determine shelter requests, it is recognised that this approach requires a review and going forward it is intended to work towards developing a clear policy for bus shelter requests which could include a scoring framework which would see outcomes recorded.