



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

PRESENT

Mr. T. Gillard CC (in the Chair)

Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC Mr. K. Merrie MBE CC
Mrs. A. J. Hack CC Mr. L. Phillimore CC
Mr. B. Lovegrove Mr. C. Smith CC

Apologies

Mr. R. G. Allen CC. Mr. C. Smith CC was present for Mr. Allen.

In attendance

Mr. O. O'Shea CC – Cabinet Lead for Member Highways and Transport
Mrs. M. Wright CC – Cabinet Support Member
Mr. S. Bray CC
Mr. M. Mullaney CC
Mr Graham Compton – Senior Traffic Management Officer, Leicestershire Police

45. Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2023 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

46. Question Time.

The following questions received under Standing Order 35, were put to the Chairman of the Highways and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

a) Question asked by Rachael Wigginton

“With a record number of residents responding to Leicestershire’s cycling and walking strategy and plan engagement, it’s very pleasing to see a greater focus on active travel filtering through into publications like the Highway Design Guide. It’s also very pleasing to see collaboration and engagement as principle number one. Most journeys are very short and people of all ages are discovering it’s very often quicker and easier to travel by (e)bike or (e)scooter, so putting active travel at the heart of local transport strategy makes perfect sense.

As active travel now sits very firmly at the heart of the government’s health, transport and net zero agendas, with longer term opportunities for funding and support now available, and with active travel featuring heavily in the vast majority of our county, district, borough and town strategies and plans,

Could the Chair please state:

Which Leicestershire county councillor is championing and leading the change (not just responsible) for Active Travel – working across all the relevant portfolio areas in the council like health, net zero etc? This person and their level of ambition and appetite for change is incredibly important to secure future funding, as we are seeing in other counties.”

Response by the Chairman

Both the Leader of the County Council and the Lead Member for Highways and Transport are fully supportive of active travel; for example, they have worked to ensure that the Authority continues to be able to fund the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS), which are vital to have in place in order for the Authority to secure funding from the Government to deliver projects that fulfil the ambitions of our cycling and walking strategy. In that context, the Authority does not consider it is necessary at this time to have a specific active travel champion.

Supplementary Question asked by Rachael Wigginton

“In response to your answer, the lack of someone driving the active travel agenda at a strategic level and taking a holistic approach across all the different local authority areas including planning, health, net zero, air quality, high street regeneration and so on is impacting on our ability to succeed in encouraging more people to walk, wheel and cycle.

In Leicestershire the vast majority of residents live in urban areas. All our towns can easily be cycled from one side to the other in under 20 minutes, less on an eBike. However, people have got into the habit of using a car for incredibly short journeys and children’s independent travel is limited as there is no safe alternative for them.

Active Travel England is a newly formed body set up as part of the Department for Transport and has responsibility for awarding active travel funding. It aims to support willing and ambitious local authorities. Therefore the approach, desire and ambition of the county council is critically important in getting hold of that funding and greater support from Active Travel England. Could you please reconsider the approach as we are in danger of missing out on funding and support?”

Response by the Chairman

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Assistant Director, Development and Growth Highways and Transport responded that the Department would provide a response in writing to the supplementary question.

Post meeting the following response was provided:

We are actively engaged with Active Travel England (ATE). We have recently secured from them £190,000 to supplement the County Council’s own monies that it has committed to the development of schemes to improve walking and cycling facilities (despite the challenging financial circumstance it and other local authorities are experiencing). We are also continuing to build our capabilities to develop schemes in accordance with cycle Design Guide LTN1/20. From our ongoing discussions with ATE we are confident that the actions we are taking will, by later this year, place us in

a position to 'bid' to it for capital funding to commence the delivery of schemes under the four Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans that we are developing.

Those LCWIPS are focusing predominantly on urban areas of Leicestershire, places where there are likely to be the greatest opportunities for people to leave their cars at home and instead feel confident and safe to walk and cycle. However, many of our towns have historic routes and are constrained in their street layouts, bringing challenges to the delivery of suitable standard walking and cycling infrastructure, whilst also needing to maintain safe vehicular access, e.g. for taxis, buses, deliveries and for those who, for whatever reason, must use a car to get around. It's also important to remember that many residents of Leicestershire live in more 'rural' areas. Thus, we are actively encouraging ATE to produce 'Market Town' and 'Rural Areas' guidance to help inform the future development of schemes in such areas.

b) Question asked by Rachael Wigginton

"When are you planning to start a partnership approach and involve local community groups like ours (as Worcestershire is now doing following its Zero active travel assessment rating from Active Travel England and the Department of Transport)? You have a number of residents from within several districts/boroughs with a broad range of skills and experience, who are willing help you on a voluntary basis. Experience ranges from working with Sustrans, Active Travel England and within the fields of civil engineering, communications and tourism."

Response by the Chairman

The Council recognises the importance of community involvement in the development of future plans and schemes for cycling and walking, and that is part of the reason why it has consulted extensively in the development of the South Leicestershire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), including with Ms Wigginton on behalf of Better Biking For Blaby District. Going forward, the Authority will be establishing an Active Travel Forum for Leicestershire, and officers will be in contact with Ms Wigginton and representatives of other relevant bodies in making arrangements to establish that Forum. Additionally, as and when the Council is in a position to develop specific local schemes, further consultation exercises with local residents and relevant bodies will be carried out to inform their development."

Supplementary Question asked by Rachael Wigginton

"'Consulted with' is not the same as 'working in partnership with'. The relationship you have with me and our community group is no different from consulting with any other resident as part of the engagement process for LCWIPs. Being a trusted partner is a completely different thing. This hands off approach is also hampering efforts to encourage more people to travel actively. In that regard, could you tell me which month the first meeting of the Active Travel Forum will be?"

Response by the Chairman

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Assistant Director, Development and Growth Highways and Transport responded that the Department would provide a response in writing to the supplementary question.

Post meeting the following response was provided:

As a general principle, we seek to undertake consultation exercises openly and fairly, such that all parties with an opinion to offer can be heard and their views considered appropriately. In some cases bodies, such as 'Better Biking for Blaby District', may have a more particular and informed insight to offer, which is why in this case we are establishing an Active Travel Forum in order for such bodies to be able to come together to do so.

We are still determining the best date to launch the forum, however prior to the launch of the forum we would like to offer you, as the chair of 'Better Biking for Blaby District' advocacy group and Cycling UK representative, the opportunity to meet with the Lead Member for Highways Transportation and Flooding, along with senior officers to discuss how bodies like 'Better Bike for Blaby District' might best be involved in the forum, as a basis for ongoing productive partnership working to encourage and enable our communities to travel actively. Should this be agreeable to you, an officer will be in contact shortly to arrange a mutually agreeable time for the meeting subject to everyone's dairies.

47. 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).

48. 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.

49. 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.

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

There were no declarations of the party whip.

51. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 35.

The Chief Executive reported that the following petition had been received under Standing Order 35:

Petition: Save the 159 Bus Service

The Committee considered a briefing note by the Director of Environment and Transport in response to a petition presented by Mr. Mullaney CC, signed by 2,388 local residents. A copy of the briefing note is filed with these minutes.

The terms of the petition were:

"I/We the undersigned call on Conservative run Leicestershire County Council to continue to fund the 159 bus service. This service is vital for many residents across the Newbold Verdon, Barlestone, Stapleton, Market Bosworth area."

Mr Mullaney provided a brief background to the petition. In presenting the petition, the following concerns were highlighted:

- i. It was the only service that connected Hinckley and Coalville, and was the only direct service to Hinckley for many villages in the Borough.
- ii. Many other services had seen reduced numbers of people using them post Covid-19.
- iii. It was hoped the 159 could be given more time to build back usage.
- iv. At a time of the cost of living crisis, the 159 bus service should be kept as an alternative to people using cars.
- v. The Demand Responsive transport did not help those who needed to use the service every day to get to work or college.
- vi. Not all areas had Demand Responsive Transport (DRT).
- vii. The service was valued, and asked whether alternative bus companies could be approached to take on the service, as even a reduced service at peak times would be welcome.

Arising from the discussion the following points were raised:

- viii. The service was subsidised by the Council at a cost of £162,792 per annum.
- ix. Options were discussed with the Operator on the future of the service, but the Operator had not been confident that the subsidy for the route could be reduced.
- x. The Passenger and Transport Policy and Strategy (PTPS) focussed the high priority journey, such as, access to food shopping and banking services at a local centre. The appendix to the report highlighted stops and points along the route and alternative methods of transport, and average boardings at those sites.
- xi. In light of the current policy the decision was made not to reinstate the subsidy to Roberts Travel. For communities left without access to commercial services, DRT had been provided by the Council.
- xii. Under legislation for public transport provision, other operators would be able to approach the Council and register the service, who would be assessed against policy.
- xiii. As recovery from the pandemic continued, there would be discussions on what transport provision needed to look like moving forward, as numbers involved in subsidies were substantial.
- xiv. Members recognised that it was an emotive issue, but the demand for public transport had been in decline since before the Covid-19 pandemic, and with the Council's financial difficulties, the high subsidies were in place for a small amount of people using the services.
- xv. It was suggested that rather than looking at routes in isolation, a more detailed review of commercial bus services should be looked at across the board to see if they were fit for purpose.
- xvi. There had in the past been a 95% coverage policy. A new baseline was needed to reflect what had happened over the years, and in looking at the transport plan going forward, flexible options would be considered, such as, Fox Connect.
- xvii. DRT was demonstrating where demand was, and what future transport provision needed to look like.

- xviii. Members recognised that officers were proactive and worked hard to mitigate the impact of service reduction or removal.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the petition be received;
- b) That the report in response to the petition be noted.

52. Response to Petition: Request for a School Crossing Outside of St Peters Catholic Primary School

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport in response to the petition containing 8,850 signatures which had been received on 19 January 2023. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

The terms of the petition were:

"We the undersigned petition the Council to install a permanent crossing in London Road, Hinckley, near to St Peters school in order to make crossing safer for local children. Parents have reported several near misses at the school and are deeply concerned about child safety. Despite repeated requests for the crossing from local councillors, parents and even the children themselves the County Council has so far failed to act".

During presentation of the report, the following points were made:

- i. There were no accidents reported in the past five years, and traffic surveys showed movement of traffic within the speed limit of 30mph.
- ii. When surveyed the location fell short of standard criteria for the requirement for a crossing.
- iii. The survey would be repeated in June when more people walked during good weather to the school.
- iv. Some highway improvements had been undertaken.
- v. Road safety initiatives would be discussed with the school to improve access and ability to walk to school.

Mr. Bray CC as lead petitioner and Members were given the opportunity to respond to the report:

- vi. The number of people who had signed the petition showed the strength of feeling for the need for a crossing.
- vii. The changes proposed were welcomed, particularly the recruitment of a school crossing patrol person, and requested Local Members be kept informed of recruitment progress.
- viii. There was disappointment that a crossing would not be installed as it would have had a wider community benefit, to allow people to access the GP, shops, and leisure centre.
- ix. Accident data was accepted, but there had been fatalities in the past, and it was unfortunate that data could not consider near misses.
- x. Future surveys were welcome, as traffic volumes were increasing.

- xi. It was suggested that as part of the planning process for new schools, that crossings formed part of the design from the outset. It was noted that technical guidance on highways was provided for such developments.
- xii. It was noted that the Sustainable Travel Team had contacted the school on several occasions to work with the school on several road safety education and sustainable travel initiatives, with no take up until June 2022.
- xiii. Proposed parking improvements were also noted. A future update report was requested following further surveys of the site in June 2023.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That Local Members be kept informed on progress of the recruitment of the School Crossing Patrol person.
- c) That an update report be provided to the meeting of the Committee following further site surveys in June 2023.

53. Environment and Transport 2023/24 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme

The Committee considered a report on the development of the 2023/24 Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme and sought comments prior to the Programmes being presented to the Cabinet on 24 April 2023.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- i. The report highlighted some of the difficulties in maintaining an efficient transport system with current constraints, such as increase in population generating additional demands for travel, increased business travel to meet supply and service needs, and maintenance of assets such as street lighting.
- ii. The report also focussed on work undertaken to secure external funding for continued investment in Leicestershire's network, active travel and passenger transport networks.
- iii. There were inflationary impacts on the capital programme, and materials and skills shortages.
- iv. Recognised that there were supply risks, for example, the retention of people who would otherwise be attracted to industries with large developing activities. such as HS2 which also resulted in competition for materials.
- v. There was extra impact on the highway network of electric vehicles (ULEVs) which were up to 30% heavier than normal vehicles. A recent study at national level suggested there would be a need for a combination of approaches, for example, the use of alternative fuels, or short journeys moved to active travel, to combat the adverse impact of heavier vehicles on the road structure.
- vi. The report showed that additional growth in the county meant additional roads, the maintenance of which could not be sustained due to cost. It was reported that work continued with local planning authorities to mitigate the impacts of growth and management of development.
- vii. With reference to the agenda report on Road Casualty Reduction in Leicestershire, it was noted Narborough Road South, Braunstone Lane and Braunstone Lane East

were in second place in terms of the number of accidents at that location. It was requested that further improvements be considered before committing spend on resurfacing of the named roads.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the proposed Highways and Transportation Capital Programme and Works Programme for 2023/24 be noted.
- b) That Committee's comments be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 24 April 2023.

54. Road Casualty Reduction in Leicestershire

The Committee considered an update report which confirmed reported road casualty statistics up to the end of 2021, Leicestershire's approach to road casualty reduction and Leicestershire Police's approach to Road Safety.

Mr Graham Compton, Senior Traffic Management Officer at Leicestershire Police, was in attendance to present the information at Appendix A to the report.

Arising from discussion, the following points were noted:

- i. The Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Road Safety Partnership Board was set up in the Mid-1990s because of a high level of casualties. A lot of work had been undertaken and the number of yearly casualties reduced but had now plateaued.
- ii. During the Christmas campaign there had been over 170 drink / drug driving arrests, which was the highest figure recorded by Leicestershire Police, and was an issue across the whole of the United Kingdom.
- iii. There was an increase in the number of abnormally large loads movements.
- iv. With the support of the Council, 20 Community Speed Watch schemes would go ahead.
- v. With regard to the recent changes to the Highway Code given priority to pedestrians over vehicles, it was noted that accident figures were reported in arrears, and the changes had not yet been evidenced. It was further noted that the Partnership had been very supportive of the changes and the hierarchy involved.
- vi. There were changes to the drop in casualty figures in 2017, due to a change in reporting information and changed approach for comparison.
- vii. When overlaying data sets rather than in isolation, it relied in part on communication with different teams to link together patterns, such as, enquiries, lamp post knockdowns, highways intervention over accident and casualty injuries.
- viii. With regards whether the public walking and cycling were safer on a shared route or separate routes, it was reported the Government would be issuing guidance for vulnerable road users, pedestrians and cyclists using shared spaces. Further guidance was also expected for more rural and market town areas.

The Lead Members for Highways and Transport thanked the Road Safety Partnership and officers and gave assurance that road safety was a priority for the Council.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the change of medium and long-term road safety targets as set out in paragraph 61 of the report be noted; and
- b) The minimum threshold for Rural Route Initiative Intervention as set out in paragraph 92 of the report be noted.

55. Highways and Transport Performance Report to December 2022

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with the latest performance update on the key performance indicators that the Council was solely or partly responsible for within its Strategic Plan covering Highways and Transport Services (within the Environment and Transport Department) to December 2022 (Quarter Three).

Arising from discussion, it was noted that:

- i. Nine of the 18 performance indicators measured through the year had been updated, which were aligned with the County Council's Strategic Plan Outcomes.
- ii. The County Council compared very well to other local authorities, with 12 indicators in the top quartile.
- iii. Under the 'Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure' outcomes, five indicators were updated in Quarter Three.
- iv. Local passenger journeys which originated in the local authority area had declined by 2%.
- v. Recent data showed a 20% improvement in 'Park and Ride' journeys but had still not reached pre-pandemic numbers.
- vi. All three road condition performance indicators had similar performance to the previous year, but there was concern about the rising proportion of the network in 'amber' condition.
- vii. Under 'Safe and Well Road Safety' outcome, all five road casualty indicators were in the top quartile when compared with other local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

56. Date of next meeting.

RESOLVED:

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 8 June 2023 at 2.00pm.

2.00pm to 3.46pm.
09 March 2023

CHAIRMAN

This page is intentionally left blank