

**MEETING OF HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY AND
SERVICE COMMITTEE: MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday 3rd November 2015

Time: 10:00am-12.10pm

Present: Councillors Ashwood, Bates (substituting for Councillor Hunt), Butcher, Chapman, Connor, Criswell, Gillick, Hickford (Chairman), Moghadas, Reeve (Vice-Chairman), Rouse, Scutt and Taylor

Apologies: Councillor Hunt (Cllr Bates substituting)

Also present: Councillors Bullen, Harty, Mandley, Orgee and Tew

144. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

145. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Action Log was noted.

146. PETITION

The Committee considered a 1257 signature petition requesting action to improve road safety for primary and secondary school children in Waterbeach. The petition requested that (i) a Primary School crossing person be recruited and a crossing be put in place; (ii) the Primary School was included as a Safer Routes to School scheme; (iii) the secondary school bus route (Landbeach to Cottenham) was reinstated as a priority gritting route, and (iv) parents' concerns regarding the standard of County secondary school buses were addressed.

Presenting the petition, District Councillor James Hockney outlined the particular issues faced in Waterbeach. He advised that since the petition had been presented, the gritting route had been reinstated, although the community was still concerned as there had been coverage in the Cambridge News about further reductions in gritting related to the Business Planning proposals. In addition, better quality buses had been operating on the route recently, although there was still an issue as to whether the wearing of seatbelts was being enforced. He outlined the issues with regard to the school crossing patrol.

In response to Member questions, District Councillor Hockney advised:

- around 200 children were travelling from Waterbeach to Cottenham Village College, and there had been an issue of overcrowding on the bus;

- the primary school was actively trying to promote walking and cycling, and the community was also involved in finding solutions.

It was stressed that whilst the school bus route was currently on the gritting routes, the route would not be treated any differently to any other location, and would be subject to review in the same way as part of any proposed Business Plan savings. For this reason any support the local community, Parish or District Councils could provide would be beneficial. District Councillor Hockney advised that the Parish Council did have a Highways Committee, and community solutions were actively being pursued.

The Committee noted the petition and the Chairman advised the Committee that the petitioners would receive a full written response within ten working days of the meeting.

47. STREETLIGHTING PFI ANNUAL CONTRACT REVIEW 2014/15

The Committee considered a report on the Street Lighting PFI Annual Contract Review for 2014/15. Representatives from Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP), Mark Oldfield and Lynsey Hanley, were present to respond to questions.

Members were reminded of the background to the street lighting PFI contract, which commenced in July 2011. The contract was supported with £100 million of PFI credits from central government. The replacement programme was being undertaken in the first five years of the contract. Progress against this programme was noted, and also the significant savings and benefits of the contract. There were a number of issues relating to consultation (in advance of the installation of new streetlights in communities), lighting levels, obstruction, etc. A total of 2698 customer enquiries had been received for the year July 2014 to June 2015, compared to 1852 in the previous year.

Arising from the report, points raised by Members included:

- highlighted that the replacement programme had a significant impact of workload on Local Members and Parish Clerks, and was pleased to note that deductions were being made for areas where BBLP had not met their performance criteria, and asked about additional costs. It was agreed that this information would be circulated to the Committee **ACTION: Tom Blackburne-Maze;**
- expressed disappointment that there was a reduction in customer satisfaction. It was clarified that a letter was sent to all residents who had been affected by the streetlighting replacement, although fewer than 1% had responded. It was also possible to feedback through the Lighting Cambridgeshire website;
- queried the reference to BBLP “... *trying to set up an independent connections provider to improve this (maintenance) performance indicator*”. Officers explained that the electric supply was owned by UK Power Networks: BBLP were trying to get permissions so that they can manage this

themselves, to speed up processes, but unfortunately the negotiations with UK Power Networks were still ongoing;

- noted that once the initial replacement of streetlights had been undertaken, there was a further twenty year contract with BBLP to maintain the streetlights;
- observed that the County Council had a duty of care to ensure highways were safe, so in that respect it was disappointing to see that customer enquiries relating to obstructions had increased from the previous years. Mark Oldfield explained how this related to how sites were set up, and also related to the issue with UK Power Networks. BBLP was working with subcontractors to ensure they followed the Red Book minimum standards, set out by the Department for Transport, and they had also undertaken toolbox talks with gangs and subcontractors. One issue was that in the year in question, more of the replacement programme had been in busier, urban areas, where obstructions were more of an issue. This issue was being actively monitored, and performance payments withheld from subcontractors where there were problems. There had been a marked improvement since the spring of 2015, but this was not reflected in the time period covered by the report;
- advised that there had been regular communications with the Cambridgeshire Alliance, in an attempt to reach all sectors of the community;
- highlighted specific issues of service failure in Romsey division, particularly in terms of obstructions and health and safety, and suggested that the original contract was flawed in terms of performance and other targets that were set. Whilst the report had a positive tone, this was not the experience in Romsey or a number of other Divisions. Mark and Lynsey [add surnames] outlined the measures being undertaken to train subcontractors and monitor performance;
- asked why LED lights were not used, which could save much more energy and money, and avoid the need to switch lights off overnight. Officers explained that at the time of the contract's inception, LED had been too costly an option, however LED technology was now being used for bollards, street signs etc. Other Members gave a brief background to the level of member scrutiny on the original contract;
- commented that there was a lack of consistency across the network with regard to the central management system (CMS), and asked if there was an option to bring more streetlights into the CMS, and also whether the issue of redundant columns still being in place was being addressed. Officers advised that it was not financially viable to extend the CMS across the county, and work undertaken last year indicated that such an extension would be too expensive, in terms of resources available and benefit. With regard to redundant columns, Mark and Lynsey [add surnames] advised that these were closely monitored: it was also noted that if there were any redundant columns in streets where BBLP had otherwise completed the streetlighting replacement, BBLP were not paid until the redundant column(s) had been removed.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the contents of the review.

148. HIGHWAY ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Committee received a report proposing changes to the County Council's Asset Management Policy, Strategy and Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) documents. This brought the County Council's standards up to date in line with current national best practice and standards. The document previously known as "Highways Policies and Standards" had been renamed "Highways Standards and Enforcement" had been incorporated into the HIAMP. Members were asked to agree minor changes to Appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the report. A summary of the main changes was included in Appendix 4.

It was noted that the Department for Transport had recently implemented a new funding mechanism which incentivised Authorities to demonstrate that they had a highway asset management plan in place, which was being used in practice. Those who did not would be penalised. The maximum level of funding available to Cambridgeshire in the forthcoming five years would reduce from £15.008M per annum in 2015/16 to £14.591M in the following five years. It was clarified that there was no way to avoid that reduction. The £14.591M would be reduced by a further £2.515M to £12.076M per annum if Cambridgeshire failed to demonstrate an asset management approach.

Arising from the report, Members:

- discussed the issues relating to the maintenance of Unclassified roads. Members were advised that over 50% of requests related to Unclassified roads, but they also accounted for over half the roads in the county, so this was probably proportionate;
- noting that the cost of rising bollards was more expensive than cameras, asked whether a proper analysis had been done, as some drivers were more likely to take a chance with enforcement cameras, meaning increased congestion in Cambridge city centre. Officers advised that whilst the bollards themselves were not prohibitively expensive, the technology was becoming obsolete so they were becoming increasingly difficult to repair and maintain;
- raised a HCV issue in relation to the A14 public inquiry. It was agreed that this would be progressed outside of the meeting. **ACTION: Tom Blackburne-Maze to contact Cllr Bates;**
- asked officers to revisit the policy of only considering HCV signage for roads with HCV traffic higher than 10%, as 10% on Unclassified roads seemed unreasonable. **ACTION: Tom Blackburne-Maze/Richard Lumley;**
- queried how many applications were submitted under the Local Highways Improvement Scheme, commenting that larger communities should be able to submit more applications than smaller ones. The Chairman advised that the scheme had recently been revised by a Member Working Group. **ACTION: Richard Lumley to update Cllr Chapman;**

- noting the policy in the Tourist Signs report that a “facility must be operating for 12 months before will consider for signage”, suggested that this was unfair to new facilities. It was agreed that officers would contact Cllr Chapman to clarify the detail of the policy. **ACTION: Richard Lumley to contact Cllr Chapman;**
- commented favourably on the highways fault reporting tool and discussed third party funding, particularly Town/Parish Councils having the flexibility to undertake works themselves;
- noting the policy of not replacing studs/cats eyes, and asked if officers could revisit this, as cats eye were often an important safety feature, especially on foggy or unlit routes. **ACTION: Tom Blackburne-Maze**

It was resolved unanimously to approve the changes to:

1. the Highway Asset Management Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
2. the Highway Asset Management Strategy, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
3. the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan 2015-2025, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

149. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF DRAFT REVENUE BUSINESS PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 2016/17 TO 2020/21

The Committee received a report providing an overview of the draft Business Plan Revenue proposals for Economy, Transport and Environment Service and specifically, the elements of that budget that were within the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee. Introducing the report, the Executive Director: Environment, Transport & Economy, reminded the Committee that these proposals had been discussed by Members in workshops.

Members’ attention was drawn to overall financial context for the Council, setting out the budgetary imperatives and environment, and the allocations and savings required from each service block. Arising from that section, individual Members:

- noted that the Council was moving to a more outcomes based business planning model;
- commented that Committee Members needed to have a better idea of the “level of pain” being experienced by other services, and whether the allocations between services needed revisiting;
- another Member agreed that the proposed budget allocation was wrong, but commented that stemmed from the more fundamental issue of central government policy, and should be resisted in the strongest possible terms.

Turning to the draft savings proposals for areas within the remit of the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee, points raised by Members included:

- noting the reduction in Highways reactive maintenance (£483K), and how this would impact on asset management. A number of Members opposed this reduction, commenting that highways maintenance was one of the core areas the public expected from the Council, and that reducing reactive maintenance could set the Council on a difficult downward spiral. It was agreed that this was an area that needed to be reconsidered;
- a number of Members felt strongly that the proposal to withdraw mobile libraries should not go ahead. They felt that mobile libraries played an important role in reducing rural isolation, and providing services to people in care homes. It was also suggested that it was poorly timed, given the ongoing Library Transformation Strategy activity, and the work of the Library Income Generation Member Working Group;
- looking at libraries more broadly, it was also suggested that it would be useful to see some of data in terms of library locations and accessibility e.g. public transport links. It was also stressed that the whole role of libraries went further than just lending books, as they were a place for advice, IT resources, etc: any savings made needed to be carefully examined against the potential cost to communities of withdrawing these facilities. It was also unreasonable to expect volunteers to keep plugging the gap;
- expressed concerns regarding the cuts to school crossings and road safety, suggesting that this would result in more people travelling by car, when the aim was to get more people walking and cycling;
- commented that the threat to grants was significant, especially at a time when more people would be needing the services of Citizens' Advice Bureaux and similar agencies;
- some Members spoke against the proposal for the night-time switch off of streetlights, suggesting that this was premature given that a public consultation was currently running on this issue. Many residents were concerned about personal safety – not just people coming home from leisure activities, but also those coming home from work, or were often in lower paid jobs so could not afford taxis, etc. The Chairman reminded Members that the Committee had previously agreed to night time overnight switch-offs;
- noted that the additional cost for residual waste was not due to the problems with Amey Cespa's plant, but related to demography changes;
- reiterated the issue on rising bollards, raised under the previous item, i.e. that some drivers would risk paying a fine, which could result in greater congestion;
- congratulated the library service on the excellent, well-attended Comics exhibition held at Cambridge Central Library recently;
- sought reassurance that all possible income streams from developers had been identified and followed up;

- the Vice Chairman stressed that the UKIP Group had opposed the overnight street lighting switch off from the outset, and still did, and noting the cost of not implementing the overnight switch-off, suggesting it would be interesting to see if Parish, Town and City Councils responded with complaints or funding;
- sought reassurance that withdrawing funding for school crossings had been raised with the schools, especially as most secondary schools were now Academies;
- suggested that caution should be applied when reducing grants – especially to organisations such as CAB – as this could lead to a greater increase in other costs to the Council;
- one Member suggested that mobile libraries were outdated, and suggested that there may be an alternative way of delivering that service in a more integrated way;
- asked what “events on highways” would cover, asking if it would cover small local events. It was confirmed that this would only cover the bigger events where there was a cost to the Council e.g. major traffic implications.

Summarising, the Chairman asked officers to revisit the following areas and report back to Committee in December:

- Highways maintenance;
- Mobile libraries;
- Crossing patrols;
- Future costs of reducing community grants;
- All options on advertising/sponsorship/income generation had been explored.

The Executive Director presented the final section of the report, on the proposed revised schedule of fees and charges. He reassured Members that charges had been increased to reflect the cost to the Council, where appropriate.

Arising from the Schedule of Fees and Charges, it was noted:

- the potential to increase on street parking charges would impact on Cambridge city. £300K could be raised, but that income would be ringfenced to transport projects and would need to reflect the costs of running the service;
- the proposal to increase the enforcement of bus lanes in Cambridge;
- the Schedule of Fees and Charges would be presented again at the December Committee, and that report would highlight where there had been changes;
- in relation to on street parking charges, that Huntingdonshire District Council had rejected the option of Civil Parking Enforcement;
- no non-statutory functions, which cost the Council money, were now included.

It was resolved by a majority to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2016/17 to 2020/21 Business Plan revenue proposals for the Service;
- b) comment on the draft revenue savings proposals that are within the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee for 2016/17 to 2020/21, and endorse them for the General Purposes Committee as part of consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan;
- c) consider the proposed approach to demography and inflation for those Economy, Transport and Environment services that are within the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee for 2016/17 and endorse the recommendations.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- d) consider the proposed fees and charges for those Economy, Transport and Environment services that are within the remit of the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee for 2016/17.

150. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2015

The Committee received a report setting out financial and performance information for Economy, Transport and Environment as at the end of September 2015. A minor amendment to the report was tabled. Members noted that for the areas under the stewardship of the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee, a balanced position was forecast for the year-end. Three overspends were being forecast at this stage in the year, in relation to streetlighting, network management and waste disposal.

The underlying ETE overspend had been decreasing month on month as a result of actions being undertaken, and stood at £92K. It was expected that the overspend would reduce further, but if it had not reduced as year-end approached, a number of further corrective measure could be taken, focusing on areas which did not impact on front line services.

Member also noted the slippage in the ETE capital programme and performance indicators.

Arising from the report, Members:

- observed that the overspend in streetlight was due to the delay in part lighting originally planned to commence in April being delayed;
- queried the major overspend for Brasely Bridge. It was noted that an email had recently been recirculated to the Committee last week on this issue, and it was agreed to recirculate this. **ACTION: John Onslow;**
- noted that no funding was being lost as a result of the delays to the Kings Dyke scheme.

It was resolved to review and note the report.

151. COMMITTEE TRAINING PLAN

Members considered the Committee Training Plan. It was noted that training sessions had been arranged for Councillor Scutt, and other Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee Members were invited to attend. The dates and details would be emailed to the Committee **ACTION: Dawn Cave.** A training session on Waste and Recycling would also be arranged.

A Member advised that she had attended one of the Highways Depots Open Days, which had been very worthwhile, but there had been nothing on Road Surface Dressings. It was agreed that an additional date would be arranged for Road Surface Dressings.

Members noted the Committee Training Plan.

152. AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members noted the Agenda Plan, including the following changes:

- Food Service Plan deferred from the December to January meeting;
- additional report March 2016 Committee on the “Community Resilience Strategy”;
- the December 2015 meeting would definitely be taking place, and would include a further Business Planning item.