

HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 20th January 2015

Time: 10:00am-12:10pm

Present: Councillors Ashwood, Butcher, Connor, Criswell, Henson (substituting for Cllr Tew), Hickford (Chairman), Hunt, Kavanagh, McGuire (substituting for Cllr Frost), Mason, Palmer, Reeve (Vice-Chairman), Rouse, Taylor, Walsh and Williams (substituting for Cllr van de Ven)

Apologies: Councillors Frost (Cllr McGuire substituting), Gillick, Tew (Cllr Henson substituting) and van de Ven (Cllr Williams substituting)

70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rouse declared an interest in item 75(b) (Objections to Traffic Regulation Order: West End, Ely) as his son worked for a business on West End, adjacent to the proposed parking restriction. He advised that he would contribute to the discussion on this item, but not vote.

71. MINUTES – 9th DECEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

72. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

73. TRANSPORT DELIVERY PLAN 2015/16-2017/18

The Committee received a report presenting the County Council's three year Transport Delivery Plan for the period 2015/16 to 2017/18.

It was resolved to:

Approve the Transport Delivery Plan 2015/16 to 2017/18 as set out in Appendix A to the report.

74. LIBRARY SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

The Committee considered a report on the draft Strategy for the Future of Library Services, which it was proposed would form the basis for stakeholder and public engagement.

The Head of Community and Cultural Services outlined the significant financial imperatives for change, and explained that more detailed proposals would be developed later in the year, following the initial consultations. The four key themes of the Strategy were:

- Building community resilience: preventing and delaying reliance on more costly services, especially health and social care;
- Enabling more than delivering: communities taking a more active role, reducing and sharing the burden of cost, and having greater involvement in decision making;
- Maximising the use of our assets in one place: i.e. sharing premises and staff – libraries are popular and well used, are seen as a safe, neutral venue, trusted by a wide cross-section of the public;
- Digital First: focusing on the role of the library service in assisting people to transact online, thereby supporting the local economy.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Scutt spoke on this issue. She applauded the approach of recreating libraries as hubs, but commented that many libraries already fulfilled this function, and she emphasised the great contribution libraries made to communities e.g. through offering meeting rooms and resources for residents to learn to use computers, the latter becoming increasingly important as an increasing amount of information was provided on the internet.

Councillor Scutt also raised the issue of Milton Road Library: This library had a Committee that was looking to redevelop the library. The proposals were revenue neutral, and £100,000 of Section 106 funding had been secured from the City Council for the redevelopment. She was keen to see the redevelopment progressed as soon as possible, not least so the Section 106 funding did not expire. The Head of Service reassured Councillor Scutt that this was being progressed, and County and City Council officers were aware of the timescales in relation to the Section 106 funding. Councillor Scutt thanked the Head of Service for her reassurance and agreed to discuss this matter further outside the meeting.

Arising from the report, Members:

- asked how quickly the Community Hubs were being developed. The Head of Service responded that Hubs were a partnership arrangement with both internal and external partners, and hubs were being rolled out as quickly as possible, with Cambridgeshire being ahead of most peer authorities;
- suggested benchmarking against other authorities, and learning from their experiences of library review. The Head of Service confirmed that the libraries team were constantly benchmarking, especially with colleagues in the East of England and Northamptonshire, and gave examples of partnership working and learning;
- sought reassurance that no libraries would be closing. The Head of Service advised that she was not able to give such reassurances, but it was hoped that

through working with partners and communities, library closures could be avoided. The Member commented that those libraries that were “self sufficient” had a clearer future, especially against such challenging savings targets. Other Members commented that when there was greater community buy-in and ownership, as demonstrated by the Library Access Points (LAPs), communities did not want to see a return to Council run services, as they preferred the independence of their new way of working;

- stressed the positive side of this process, and asked about the plans for the public consultation. Officers explained that the stakeholder consultation was the first part of the process, which would be followed by a wider public consultation on more detailed proposals later in the year. However, discussions were already taking place with communities;
- noted plans for new libraries to serve new communities, e.g. Clay Farm and Northstowe, and that those would very much be built on the Community Hub model;
- asked how those people who were not regular users of libraries would be engaged, not only in the consultation process, but in promoting the very wide range of services offered by libraries. The Head of Service indicated that research showed there was a great diversity of users in terms of age, ethnicity, etc., but agreed that reaching non-users was a challenge, and outlined measures being taken;
- expressed strong support for the proposed approach, especially given the financial challenges being faced by the Council, and noted that valuable lessons had been learned since the introduction of the LAPs. In response to a query on expanding the use of Pop-ups, the Head of Service explained that Pop-ups were not just about library services, but about relevant services going out to community buildings and hubs, as and when required. She advised that a wide range of options were being considered, and it would ultimately be a choice for communities, e.g. more resources, but possibly having to travel further to access them, or having more limited resources nearer to home. It was noted that there was already a micro-library in the Children’s Centre in Waterlees;
- asked if there was any intention to diversify into electronic readers and books, which were becoming increasingly popular. The Head of Service confirmed that this service was already in place, and that the Service offered a growing number of e-resources, but at the same time physical books remained very popular;
- asked that Local Members were kept involved in the process, as they have valuable local knowledge and insights into their communities’ needs. Officers reassured Members that this was the intention;
- asked about bidding for Section 106 funding and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Head of Service confirmed that applications for Section 106 funding were made regularly, especially for major developments, and the Council had a

good track record for attracting this funding. Scope to obtain CIL was more difficult as demand far outstrips available funds;

- asked what the proposals were for the mobile library service, which was greatly valued, especially in rural areas by the elderly. Users were concerned that the service would be cut, and elderly readers often did not have access to the necessary technology. The Head of Service advised that there were no specific proposals for mobile services, and this was an area for debate in the consultation i.e. whether it was the most appropriate way of providing the service to isolated users, or if there were other ways of reaching those users;
- expressed support for the report, and stressed that the Strategy was about retaining library services, not closing them;
- a Member highlighted that the financial imperative was a national imposition, but the Council's response was very positive, in line with the Localism and engagement agenda. The Member applauded the work of staff and volunteers who provide valuable services at libraries and LAPs to the communities they serve.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Service and her staff for the huge amount of work they had put in to developing the Strategy.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) approve the draft Strategy for the Future of Library Services in Cambridgeshire;
- b) agree that the Strategy formed the basis of initial stakeholder and public engagement on the future of the Library Service, as set out in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of the report.

75. OBJECTIONS TO TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS:

Before the reports were presented, on behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked the Head of Local Infrastructure and Street Management for her valuable work for the Council over the last three years, and wished her well in the future.

(A) 20MPH SPEED LIMIT ON VICTORIA ROAD, CAMBRIDGE

The Committee received a report on proposals to reduce the speed limit in Victoria Road, Cambridge, to 20mph. The background to the proposed scheme, and the outcomes of the statutory consultation process were noted. The scheme had the support of the Local Members, Councillors Sales and Scutt. It was noted that two objections had been received, one of which was from the bus operator, Stagecoach, and that six letters of support had also been received.

It was noted that Cambridge City Council had a policy to roll out a 20mph speed limit across the city centre. However, this was against the current County Council policy, i.e. a 20mph limit on an A or B road was not be permitted.

Dr Morrison spoke on behalf of concerned residents. He explained that Victoria Road was a narrow road with narrow pavements, and vehicles travelled at an average speed of 24mph. Reducing the speed would only increase journey times for buses by approximately 15 seconds. He added that there were four stops for the Stagecoach Citi8 service in Victoria Road, and the timetable allowed two minutes for the journey, which assumed an average speed of 15mph – therefore the commercial operation would be unaffected. The argument that introducing a 20mph speed limit would act as a precedent was unfounded, as it was the Committee's role to consider each case on its merits. Speeding vehicles were a real safety concern for all road users i.e. drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. There was no cycle lane on Victoria Road as it was too narrow, and commercial vehicles parked on the pavements to make deliveries to businesses, and the situation was particularly bad on waste/recycling collection days, when bins were left on pavements. The proposals were strongly supported by residents, and would greatly enhance quality of life.

A Member asked Dr Morrison if he had factored in to the bus timings stopping at lights, etc, and there was a discussion on the factors involved and likely average speed of buses if there was a 20mph limit.

Dr Alison Powell, another Victoria Road resident, addressed the Committee. She explained that she was a driver, pedestrian and bus user, and she felt that the 20mph limit was necessary, as 1 in 12 vehicles exceed the current 30mph limit, mainly between 6am and 3pm. Following the introduction of a 20mph limit in Bristol, there had been no adverse impact on bus times. There was only one bus service – the Citi8 to Cottenham – with three services an hour in each direction, so few buses used the road. Victoria Road was not a typical A road, being very narrow and busy, unlike e.g. Huntingdon Road or Madingley Road, and these distinctive characteristics should be taken into account when considering the objections and application of the County Council's policy.

Local Member Councillor Sales thanked the speakers for their involvement. He reiterated that the road and pavements were very narrow, and advised that there was a popular kindergarten at St Luke's Church on Victoria Road. He explained that along with City Councillors, he had undertaken an extensive consultation in the area, and there was overwhelming support for the scheme. He strongly supported the introduction of the 20mph limit.

Local Member Councillor Scutt advised that she had also undertaken a survey for the residents in her Division, Victoria Road being split between two Divisions. There was only one resident who objected to the proposal, and one who did not care either way – the rest of the residents supported the introduction of the 20mph limit. She also felt that the 'thin end of the wedge' argument was unfounded. She thanked officers for their excellent report but commented that she did feel there were equality and diversity implications, due to the number of elderly and young families who lived on the road, especially those who used the road to take children to school or to catch the bus. She also felt that there were positive Public Health implications in terms of reduced pollution, and improved safety for cyclists, pedestrians and drivers.

The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to written comments from resident Oliver Woodford, circulated to all Committee Members.

Arising from the report:

- a number of Members expressed support for the proposal, pointing out that it was a City Council project, and therefore cost neutral to the County Council. The scheme clearly had strong support from both residents and Local Members. Whilst it was contrary to the County Council's speed limit policy, it should be allowed as Victoria Road was not a typical, arterial A road. It was also suggested that the County Council's policy should be reviewed by the Committee, to take greater account of local circumstances, rather than taking a blanket approach;
- whilst supporting the proposal, one Member spoke in support of the bus operator, pointing out that they were serving the needs of bus users and trying to provide a punctual service. It was further pointed out that the Citi8 mainly experienced delays as a result of travelling down Histon Road, which suffered greatly from congestion;
- a Member expressed support for the proposal, due to the overwhelming support from residents and Local Members, but did not feel that the 20mph speed limit would actually reduce speeds and improve safety on the road;
- a Member spoke against the proposal, explaining that he had experience managing buses. He also advised that a bus service had been withdrawn from two villages in his Division on the basis of reduced speed limits in the city centre, which had resulted in increased journey times. He suggested that bus users commuting from Cottenham and Histon may find the frequency of the Citi8 service reduced. He acknowledged the point from the public speaker on the experience in Bristol, but pointed out that Bristol had more bus priority measures, so there were more opportunities for buses to recover time. He felt that it was important to take account of Stagecoach's views when considering this matter;
- on a general point, a Member noted that there were no comments from the emergency services, and that there rarely were in these reports, despite arguments by other objectors e.g. that emergency vehicles would experience difficulties as the result of proposals. Officers advised that the emergency services were statutory consultees, but were not obliged to comment;
- a Member commented that Victoria Road, particularly the Mitchams Corner gyratory end, was a hostile environment for road users, and she supported the 20mph limit.

It was resolved, by a majority, to:

- a) approve and make the Order as advertised;
- b) inform the objectors accordingly

(B)WEST END, ELY

The Committee received a report on proposals to introduce parking restrictions in West End, Ely. The background to the proposed scheme, and the outcomes of the statutory consultation process were noted. The scheme had come forward as part of the Local Highway Initiative. It was noted that twelve objections had been received, plus a petition with 30 signatures, and three comments of support.

Local Member Councillor Bailey spoke in support of the scheme. She used a photo to illustrate the particular problems in the road, including the narrowness, which was exacerbated by vehicles parking on both sides, and the poor visibility, especially at the junction when commercial vehicles were making deliveries to businesses. She advised that opinion was divided among residents, but on the grounds of safety, she felt that the proposed scheme should go ahead.

Councillor Rouse spoke, and showed on a map where delivery vehicles parked when delivering to the shop. He further advised that the original concerns which had prompted the proposal had been about emergency vehicles being unable to drive down the road when vehicles were parked on both sides. However, residents were also concerned about being able to park near the homes, and businesses being able to receive deliveries.

Arising from the report, Members:

- noted that to the Local Member's knowledge, there had been no requests for disabled parking permits at this location;
- noted that there had been no reported accidents at this location;
- a Member commented that he lived near this road, and he highlighted other issues e.g. from vehicles reversing on to the road from West End Mews, and that the double yellow lines were only for a limited section of the road. He also pointed out that there were many pedestrians accessing the shop, and the safety issues should be paramount, to improve visibility at the junction.

It was resolved unanimously*:

- a. approve and make the Order as advertised
- b. inform the objectors accordingly

(Councillor Rouse did not vote on this item)

76. 2015/16 TARGETS FOR HIGHWAYS & COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee considered a report on the proposed targets for 2015/16. It was noted that these performance indicators had been developed across ETE Services, and in liaison with Public Health colleagues. Targets had been developed using the latest available information, including recent trends, and took account of any factors that were likely to impact on performance over the coming year. Street lighting

targets were already built in to the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) performance contract.

Whilst supporting the proposed targets, several Members spoke in favour of a more in-depth review by Members in 2015/16 as part of Business Planning for 2016/17, specifically to be more outcome focused.

It was resolved unanimously to:

approve the proposed 2015/16 targets for Highways & Community Infrastructure key indicators as set out in Appendix A to the report.

77. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report setting out financial and performance information for Economy, Transport and Environment as at the end of November 2014. It was noted that the year end position was anticipating(i) a revenue underspend of £540,000 for ETE; (ii) a capital underspend of £27.262M. For the Committee's twelve Performance Indicators, four were currently red, and eight green.

Discussing the report, Members:

- noting that there were no items above the *de minimis* reporting limit of £30,000 in November 2014, asked who actually approved virements above that amount? It was confirmed that this was a delegation to the Executive Director, in line with the County Council's Scheme of Delegation;
- noted the issues with the Balfour Beatty street lighting contract, specifically the consultation process, in that consultation was taking place *after* work had started, and asked why it had not been possible to bring the consultation process forward. It was noted that senior officers were working closely with Balfour Beatty, particularly to address the mismatch of work over the last 4-6 weeks. Balfour Beatty had acknowledged and explained the issues, and would shortly be communicating these issues to all Members. It was stressed that no communities would be at a disadvantage e.g. if communities came to a different decision following consultation, and work had already been carried out, Balfour Beatty would rectify the position. Whilst noting this, Members commented that the public perception of this would not help the process;
- a Member stressed the importance of PFI streetlighting consultations, especially in smaller communities with few street lights, and asked that Balfour Beatty should be compelled to accompany Local Members. The Member was advised that Balfour Beatty could not be compelled to send staff to Parish meeting, but a number of Members applauded the excellent engagement work of Balfour Beatty's Keeley Russell, pointing out that she attended many Parish meetings. It was also stressed that the streetlighting contract had been outsourced;

- noted the revenue savings made in the Archives development budget related to staff vacancies that had not been filled;
- expressed concern that whilst cycling was being actively promoted, more cyclists were being killed or seriously injured, and suggested that more measures needed to be made e.g. improved cycle routes and dedicated cycle lanes. The specific dangers to cyclists of speeding traffic on rural roads in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland were also raised. Officers confirmed that per mile travelled, statistics showed that motorcyclists were most at risk, followed by cyclists, then car drivers. Cyclists faced more risks when they shared roads with other road users. There was a discussion around better cyclist education, and it was suggested that a report should be produced, showing where the motorcyclist and cyclists casualties were, and proposing measures to address this problem. Members observed that there was a great appetite for cycling, but many potential cyclists were put off by the perceived risks. It was also suggested that leaflets should be available for inexperienced cyclists, or those not used to cycling in the UK e.g. school children and those attending language schools;
- in response to a question about the funding of cycling training at schools, it was confirmed that there was greater uptake now that this was being run professionally through the 'Bikeability' scheme, funded by the Department of Transport;
- discussed the latest position on the MBT plant. Officers confirmed that they were negotiating with AmeyCespa on the future use and performance of the facility;

It was resolved unanimously to:

review and comment upon the report.

78. SERVICE COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS

The Committee was asked to review its agenda plan. It was agreed that the review of road safety for cyclists and motorcyclists, discussed under the Finance and Performance report, would be considered at the March meeting. The Committee also noted that the report on "Highway Asset Records Strategy" had been withdrawn from the March agenda.

Members were advised that the reserve date of 10th February would be used to consider the following items:

- Cambridgeshire Guided Busway Park & Ride Sites – Parking Charges Traffic Regulation Order
- Review of Local Highway Improvement Scheme

It was resolved unanimously to note the agenda plan, including the updates reported orally at the meeting.