

HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 18th November 2014

Time: 10.00am to 1.35pm

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

Apologies: Councillors Mason (Cllr Hipkin substituting) and Tew (Cllr Henson substituting)

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. MINUTES – 23rd SEPTEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, with the following amendment: p7 (third amendment): reworded to read “To request officers to investigate discretionary third cuttings of grass verges (i.e. where required on safety grounds)”

52. PETITIONS

The Committee received a petition:

Request for traffic light controls at the Church Road/A10 junction in Hauxton

Mr Williams presented a petition requesting a review of the parking issues in Dovehouse Close and Potters Lane. Paper copies of the petition, including individual letters of support, were available for inspection by the Committee Members.

In addressing the Committee, Mr Williams explained that inappropriate and inconsiderate parking had been an issue over a number of years, with many people leaving their cars parked all day as they used the nearby train station for commuting, sometimes arriving as early as 5am. This led not only to problems for residents getting in and out of their own properties, but also for emergency vehicles, care staff, deliveries etc, and had led to a deterioration in the area.

Members asked Mr Williams the following questions:

- What the petitioners proposed to do. Mr Williams explained that the petition set out a number of possible options, including a parking restriction for a short time

(e.g. one hour over lunchtime). A combination of measures would probably be necessary;

- If there was adequate parking at the Ely railway station. Mr Williams said the car park was usually full by 8.30am, but there was alternative public parking provision not far from the station e.g. at Angel Drove. The bigger issue was the rapid growth of Ely, and associated pressures on infrastructure;
- If the petitioners had explored other avenues. Mr Williams confirmed that he had submitted petitions to East Cambridgeshire District and City of Ely Councils, and also met with County Council officers. PCSOs had visited the site but were limited in what they could do, because the parking was not illegal;
- Asked if Local Highways Improvement grants had been explored. Mr Williams confirmed that they had looked at this option, but the City of Ely Council had advised it would take up to 18 months for this to be implemented. Members outlined the process for Local Highways Improvement funding.

The Chairman thanked the petitioner for his presentation, and advised that he would receive a full written response within ten working days of the meeting.

Taxi ranking and request for a 'trixi' mirror, Market Street, Ely

The Committee received a petition requesting additional taxi ranking on Market Street, and also improvements to the safety of the junction of Market Street and Lynn Road. The petitioner had asked for his petition to be received in his absence.

The Chairman advised that the petitioner would receive a full written response within ten working days of the meeting.

54. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER (TRO) OBJECTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH:

(A) HASLINGFIELD

The Committee received a report on proposals to reduce speed limits in Haslingfield. The background to the proposed scheme, and the outcomes of the statutory consultation process were noted. The scheme had the support of the Local Member, Councillor Kindersley. It was noted that in addition to the objection, twelve letters of support had been received after the end of the statutory consultation process.

Councillor van de Ven, as Member for the adjacent division, spoke in support of the proposals, especially as the first 20mph stretch had a lot of school and pedestrian traffic.

It was resolved to:

- 1) approve and make the Order as advertised;
- 2) inform the objectors accordingly.

(B) MAGAZINE CLOSE, WISBECH

The Committee received a report on proposals to install a disabled parking place in Magazine Close, Wisbech. The background to the proposed scheme, and the outcomes of the statutory consultation process were noted. One objection had been received, regarding the loss of parking capacity by including an additional parking bay. There had also been one comment.

It was clarified that the disabled parking bay was situated opposite no. 4 Magazine Close, and could be used by anyone with a Blue Badge. It was noted that there was an informal arrangement in Magazine Close whereby residents only park on one side of the road, leaving the other side free for traffic.

It was confirmed that the two disabled spaces would be far enough apart that there was a meaningful space in between.

On a more general point, it was confirmed that disabled spaces were periodically reviewed, but there was no policy - this was undertaken on an ad hoc basis. It was also possible for a new occupier of a property with a disabled parking space to ask for it to be removed. It was noted that the key thing was the sign – once the sign had been removed, the parking bay was not enforceable i.e. it was not enforceable if there were just the road markings.

It was unanimously resolved to:

- 1) approve and make the Order as advertised;
- 2) inform the objectors accordingly.

(C) WEST END, BRAMPTON

The Committee received a report on a proposal to reduce the speed limit in West End and Elizabethan Way in Brampton to 20mph. Two objections had been received, both relating to the enforcement of the speed limit and the associated costs. There were no objections from the emergency services.

Local Member Councillor Downes spoke in support of the scheme, which had been brought forward by the Parish Council. He explained that West End was a former drove and was quite narrow. He outlined the busy nature of the road in terms of its proximity to a local residential estate and primary school. The majority of vehicles using the road were travelling below 30mph, as the road was narrow and had numerous parked vehicles, but some cars have been recorded travelling at 53mph. Councillor Downes explained that he had been successful in spreading the message around the village about the County Council's financial difficulties, and he felt that this was partly the reason for the objections on the grounds of cost. He also advised the Committee that he had recently set up a Community Speedwatch scheme, which would become operational shortly.

In response to a Member question, Councillor Downes confirmed that West End was a narrow road, with a pavement on one side, and a lot of local parking. There was no traffic calming.

A Member commented that differing speed limits can be confusing for drivers, and he asked what evidence there was that a 20mph speed limit was justified. Officers advised that the general principle was that the speed limit had to “be appropriate” for the particular environment. It was confirmed that there were no longer restrictions relating to proving average speeds of vehicles.

It was resolved, by a majority, to:

- 1) approve and make the Order as advertised;
- 2) inform the objectors accordingly.

55. SERVICE COMMITTEE REVIEW OF THE FINAL DRAFT 2015-20 REVENUE PROPOSALS

The Committee received a report on the final draft revenue proposals for the areas covered by the Highways and Community Infrastructure Committee, for the Business Plan in 2015/16.

The Chairman advised that the papers included a proposed capitalisation of £150K for winter maintenance, which would lead to 38% of the county's roads being gritted (the original proposal would have resulted in approximately 32% of the county's roads being gritted). However, at a workshop of the General Purposes Committee on 14th November, Members had been advised that additional funding would be available in 2015/16, from an underspend in the current year. At that workshop, a strong case had been made by both the Economy & Environment Committee and the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee, to use some of the funding to address areas of greatest concern, specifically winter maintenance (£300K), street lighting (£80K) and community grants (£15K). The General Purposes Committee would consider those proposals at its meeting on 2nd December. For that reason, it was proposed that the Committee consider the outcome of that discussion at the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee meeting provisionally scheduled for 9th December.

Whilst acknowledging the points raised, a Member suggested that given the Council's serious financial situation, the £2.5M underspend should not be regarded as a 'windfall' but a saving across the Council, and the Committee should not endorse any spending put forward for that underspend. The Chairman pointed out that the decision to spend or save the underspend would ultimately be made by the General Purposes Committee who would then make recommendations to full Council. A number of other Members acknowledged the suggestion of saving the £2.5M, but pointed out that the implications of not gritting rural roads had far-reaching impacts for Cambridgeshire residents, and the winter maintenance budget should be protected if at all possible, especially as the amounts concerned were relatively small. It was clarified that if successful, the £300K would go towards maintaining the status quo on gritting routes, i.e. there would not be any additional routes gritted. In response to a question, it was confirmed that if the Council stopped

gritting certain routes, and there were accidents, the Council would not expect to be legally liable, as vehicles had to drive to the road conditions – the Council's key responsibility in this regard would be letting people know which roads were gritted.

A Member commented some of the other Committees did not appear to be as far advanced as this Committee, and this Committee's proposals were well thought-out and the Amendment should be put forward, in case this additional funding came forward. He further suggested that other alternatives need to be considered e.g. actively promoting the use of winter tyres and reviewing the criteria for gritting.

A Member pointed out that the amount suggested for Community Grants was very small (£15K) but represented a real "spend to save" opportunity. It was also noted that the Community Impact Assessment for Community Grants had been very negative, so every effort should be made to preserve that budget. The Chairman acknowledged this point but pointed out that the proposal for Community Grants would effectively defer the reduction for a year.

The Committee was advised that a further issue that had been raised in the General Purposes Committee workshop was a proposal from the Economy & Environment Committee to review the cut to Fenland Learning Centre. There may need to be further prioritisation between the two Committees depending on the decision by the General Purposes Committee.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Criswell, and seconded by Councillor van de Ven:

- d) endorse a proposal to use any potential additional funding for winter maintenance (£300,000), street lighting (£80,000) and community grant (£15,000), subject to the outcome of the General Purposes Committee in December 2014.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

Introducing the report, the Executive Director: Economy, Transport & Environment advised that there had been no changes to the proposed savings. He outlined the issues in relation to the capitalisation of £58K of the revenue budget for road patching repairs. A Member observed that whilst this would impact positively on the delivery of repairs in the coming year, it was only possible to capitalise once, and if in future there were pressures on the capital budget in future, those sums would be cut or may need to move back to the revenue budget, so any capitalisation needed to be done judiciously.

A Member commented that the Committee's proposals for the 2015/16 budget represented a well balanced budget. However, the situation in subsequent years was very serious. He suggested that the proposals for fees and charges be revisited, as these appeared to be low and there was potential to earn significant additional income in that area by introducing more commercial charges. The Executive Director responded that most of the items in the fees and charges list were where the Council was a monopoly provider, and the government view was that the Council could only cover costs, so it was not possible to increase charges and gain

an income in these areas. Another Member commented that it was part of the Council's job to support businesses, notto hinder.

A Member requested more information on reducing back office budgets, specifically what was left so that Members could identify if there was any potential to bring forward any savings in that area. The Executive Director assured the Committee that all Economy, Transport and Environment services were very efficient, but acknowledged that there was always scope to review and make further savings.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the overview and context provided for the 2015-20 Revenue Proposals for Economy, Transport and Environment
- b) comment on the final draft proposals for Economy, Transport and Environment's 2015-20 revenue budgets and endorse them
- c) consider the proposed levels of fees and charges for Economy, Transport and Environment in 2015-20 and endorse them;
- d) endorse a proposal to use any potential additional funding for winter maintenance (£300,000), street lighting (£80,000) and community grant (£15,000), subject to the outcome of the General Purposes Committee in December 2014.

(Councillor Taylor was not present for this vote)

56. PROPOSED HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2015/16

The Committee considered a report on proposed Key Performance Indicators for 2015/16. The proposed indicators were the same as for 2014/15 reporting, except for the proposed addition of a small number of indicators measuring relative deprivation. This resulted from the approval of a Motion at the full Council meeting in July 2014 to *"identify a small number of key performance indicators relevant to the issue of multiple deprivation with each Committee area, and set measureable targets for improvement against these indicators"*.

With regard to the first performance indicator, *the proportion of street lights that are working*, Members were advised that this formed part of the contract with Balfour Beatty, i.e. the contractor was obliged to collate this information and there was no additional cost borne by the Council.

It was resolved by a majority to:

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

57. HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan and supporting documentation, setting out how the County Council would manage the Highway Network.

Attention was drawn to two proposals for revised reactive maintenance response times:

- the previous 24 hour response for urgent defect would be extended to 36 hours (i.e. end of next working day);
- Category 1 (urgent) responses for non-emergency potholes had been revised from 24 hours to a five day response for permanent repairs i.e. a “right first time” principle.

It was noted that options for reviewing the Local Highways Initiatives scheme were outside of the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan. A Member commented that the operation of that scheme needed to be reviewed, as the current scheme favoured larger Parish Councils.

With regard to grass cutting of verges, it was confirmed that grass cutting was twice a year, and visibility splays were cut three times a year or as and when necessary. The Plan would be updated to reflect this.

With regard to reactive intervention levels for drainage and flooding, it was agreed that clarity would be sought and the Plan would be updated to reflect this. It was clarified that the response on flooding usually related to major incidents, and that underlying causes would not necessarily be addressed within two hours. With regard to reactive intervention levels for overhanging trees, it was clarified that no response time was included as this was usually an issue for the land or property owner. The Plan would be updated to make this clearer.

With regard to the Communications Strategy (Appendix II to the report), a correction was noted that communications were on a digital by *default* basis.

A Member observed that the report did not allude to the new Highways contract in 2016, and that methodologies may change as a result.

It was resolved unanimously:

To approve the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan as set out in the report and the associated documents Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

58. STREET LIGHTING PFI ANNUAL CONTRACT REVIEW 2013/14

The Committee considered a report on the Street Lighting PFI Annual Contract Review 2013/14. As at June 2014, 26,598 streetlights had been upgraded, 2,909 illuminated bollards, signs and feeder pillars had been upgraded, and 2,573 streetlights had been permanently removed. The report also contained detailed

feedback on consultations and customer service. Representatives from Balfour Beatty, Keeley Russell and Ian Townhill, were present to respond to questions.

In discussion, issues raised included:

- dimming of the new lights was already happening but there had been hardly any reaction to this – most residents seem unaware that the lights were being dimmed. The big issue for residents was the removal of streetlights;
- noted the options available for consultation, particularly traditional (i.e. not electronic) routes of communication, as many of the issues came from older residents who did not always have access to the internet;
- a number of Members raised individual queries in relation to the streetlight programme in their Divisions. Keeley agreed to respond to these outside the meeting;
- a Member raised the issue of billing Parish Councils, advising that she was aware of some duplication and anomalies, and asked what was being done to guard against inconsistencies and errors. Officers reassured Members that they were aware of these issues and processes were being improved;
- a Member queried why the decision had been taken to use low energy bulbs rather than LED bulbs/ Officers responded that this had been the right decision at the time, as the cost of LED bulbs at the time had been so high. However, officers were constantly reviewing LED and other alternatives, and Members noted that LED bulbs were being used on illuminated signs;
- Councillor Reeve requested that his thanks to Balfour Beatty be recorded: the level of streetlighting provided had effectively been reduced whilst the infrastructure had been upgraded. Balfour Beatty had managed the contract efficiently and effectively, in a very well structured and professional way, despite numerous complaints. He paid tribute to Keeley Russell, who had been very proactive and incredibly helpful. A number of other Members including Councillor Connor passed on their thanks to Balfour Beatty and Keeley;
- a Member commented that her experience with Balfour Beatty had not been so positive, particularly the consultation process. Keeley advised that an improved consultation process had been put in place in March 2014, and it was hoped that this would continue to improve the Councillor and resident experience. It was confirmed that the lead time for consultations was 45 working days. Removals were the most contentious issue, and these did not happen until 3 to 4 weeks into the process;
- a Member commented that in Wisbech the removals were not a problem, and the new streetlights were good, but the issue was when the previous columns had been left in, and he cited a number of examples. There was also an issue where new lights were put up in front of Listed buildings.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Comment on and note the contents of the review.

59. HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING SERVICE PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

The Committee considered a report on the feedback from the Household Recycling Service review public consultation.

Members raised the following issues:

- suggested that any prohibition on the use of trailers should be limited to larger four wheeled trailers, as many households had smaller, two wheeler trailers;
- queried the response from neighbouring authorities. It was confirmed that three neighbouring authorities had responded – Norfolk, Hertfordshire and Peterborough. Peterborough had been involved throughout, and was particularly concerned about the possible impact of a closure of Whittlesey or Alconbury. Norfolk was concerned about the impact that closures in the north of the county would have on Kings Lynn. It was suggested that neighbouring authorities who had not responded could be followed up;
- a Member suggested charging for all vehicles using the Household Recycling Centre, to increase income and avoid the need for closures. Officers advised that the Council was legally unable to charge for the disposal of household waste. However, if a third party (e.g. a community operator) ran sites, they could charge, which had happened in Suffolk. However, there had been no approaches made in Cambridgeshire proposing such a venture, and there were factors affecting the Waste PFI contract e.g. all recyclates had to go through the PFI contractor as it was contractually still Cambridgeshire's waste;
- Members commented that closure of some sites was probably unavoidable, as many of the options put forward were not deliverable;
- a Member suggested charging neighbouring authorities. Officers explained that the problem was that this worked both ways. It was also suggested that when there was a large development on the county borders, a contribution could be sought for the neighbouring Household Recycling Centres within Cambridgeshire. Officers advised that in such cases, all developer contributions go to the authority in which the development was situated – there was no scope for cross border arrangements.

It was resolved unanimously to:

To note the feedback from the Household Recycling Service Review consultation so that the results can be considered as part of a wider waste review going forward

60. ANNUAL PARKING REPORT 2013/14

A report was presented setting out the operational and financial performance of the Council's Parking Services for 2013/14. Members were pleased to note that during 2013/14, expenditure had reduced and income had increased. It was clarified that any surplus income earned from parking charges had to be spent on parking or related service e.g. highways, under the Traffic Management Act.

In discussion, Members:

- noted that there were increasing requests for residents' parking schemes, and as a result the policy was being reviewed. It was anticipated that a new policy would be in place in mid-2015;

- raised the issue of dangerous parking around schools. Officers advised that this was a perennial problem, and whilst enforcement officers could be deployed, this only had a temporary effect. **ACTION: Nikki Pasek to contact Cllr Taylor;**
- a Member commented that in his division there was a particular issue with commuter parking, and a parking zone had been suggested, but there had been no further developments. Officers confirmed that there was a parking review being progressed, and she would contact the Member accordingly **ACTION: Nikki Pasek to contact Cllr Kavanagh;**
- a Member asked how many foreign registered vehicles escaped parking charges. Officers advised that this information was available and they would provide the information to the Member. **ACTION: Nikki Pasek to contact Cllr Hipkin.**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve the Annual Parking Report 2013/2014.

61. PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE CORONERS SERVICE

The Committee considered a report outlining the programme made following a member-led review of Coroner Services, and to agree the preferred position regarding the future service model.

Officers explained that there were currently two part-time Coroners for Cambridgeshire, although both had formally indicated that they would retire in April 2015. Peterborough was a separate coronial jurisdiction. The preferred option was a merged Coronial Jurisdiction, but this required the agreement of all parties. The merger would lead to considerable savings and efficiencies. A number of other authorities were undergoing the same process.

A Member spoke in support of the proposals, and commented favourably on the excellent work of the County's Coroners Service Team. Whilst acknowledging that the recruitment process would be led by the Chief Coroner, he asked if it could be as close to local authority best practice as possible.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) the Council's preferred position of forming a merged Coronial jurisdiction for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by the end of April 2015;
- b) the Council forming a merged Coronial jurisdiction for Cambridgeshire alone (i.e. without Peterborough), should the proposal in (a) above not be achievable.

62. BUSINESS ADVICE, ENQUIRIES AND CHARGING POLICY REVIEW

A report was presented on proposed amendment to the Supporting Businesses and Communities, Business Advice and Charging Policy. This was to ensure that an equitable and consistent advice service was provided to all Cambridgeshire businesses.

A Member commented favourably on the proposed Policy and suggested that other teams within the Council could learn from this positive approach to businesses.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve the amendments to the Business Advice, Enquiries and Charging Policy.

63. CROMWELL MUSEUM: UPDATE ON FUTURE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee considered a report on plans for the transition of the Cromwell Museum to an independent charitable organisation to run the museum from April 2016, and to invite the Committee to make decisions about the way forward.

Bob Pugh spoke on behalf of the Friends of Cromwell Museum. He raised concerns on the timescales and how these would impact on the viability and deliverability of the proposals, especially how these fitted in with Huntingdon Town Council's processes. He also expressed concerns as to whether the proposed timescales would allow enough time to advertise, recruit and train Trustees. He welcomed the delegation of decision making if this led to quicker decision making.

Councillor Downes spoke in support of the report, as Chairman of the Cromwell Museum Management Committee. He commented that there was general agreement on the way forward, although the timescales were constrained.

Responding to questions from, the Committee, officers:

- advised that they felt that the timescales set out in the report were achievable;
- confirmed that the building was well maintained by the County Council;
- confirmed that any redundancies would be borne by the County Council.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) approve the creation of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as the preferred model for the new trust;
- b) delegate further decision making on this matter to the Executive Director – Economy, Transport and Environment in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee.

64. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE REPORT: SEPTEMBER 2014

The Committee received a report setting out financial and performance information for Economy, Transport and Environment as at the end of September 2014. It was noted that the performance information included related only to those indicators that the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee had responsibility for.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Review and comment upon the report

65. SERVICE COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS

The Committee noted its agenda plan.

It was resolved to:

- 1) note the agenda plan.