

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 3rd February 2015

Time: 10.00am to 1.20pm

Present: Councillors R Butcher, E Cearns (Vice-Chairman), Cllr B Chapman, D Connor (substituting for Cllr Clark), D Harty, R Henson, J Hipkin, D Jenkins, N Kavanagh, A Lay, T Orgee (substituting for Cllr Bates), M Shuter, A Walsh and J Williams

Also present: Councillors J Clark and M Mason

Apologies: Councillor I Bates, J Clark and Divine

89. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Jenkins and Cearns declared non-prejudicial interests as Members of the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee; Councillor D Jenkins also declared a non-prejudicial interest as a Member of the County Council's Planning Committee.

90. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th January 2015 were agreed as a correct record

Officers provided updates on the following items in the Action Log:

Item 44/Section 106 – officers had met with Councillor Whitehead regarding transport for residents in Barnwell.

Item 58/Local Transport Plan – a meeting had been scheduled.

Item 63/Cambridgeshire Future Transport – the Council had been invited to submit a bid for Total Transport funding to government by 11th February 2015. The funding would support the development of a pilot. The CFT steering group was being reinvigorated and membership had been agreed, subject to one confirmation.

The Minutes Action Log was noted.

91. PETITIONS

None were received.

92. A605 KINGS DYKE LEVEL CROSSING CLOSURE – SELECTION OF PREFERRED OPTION AND PROCUREMENT

The Committee considered a report on the responses to the public consultation and the assessment of the options to alleviate congestion on the A605. Members noted that 827 responses had been received as part of the consultation, with 95% respondents being in favour of replacing the level crossing, and a majority of respondents preferring Location 3 as the best option for the proposed route.

Attention was drawn to the Options Assessment Report (OAR), which set out the impact of the three locations. This concluded that whilst Location 3 was slightly longer, it had other advantages e.g. easier crossing for pedestrians, as well as being the preferred route for the majority of respondents.

In response to technical questions from Members, officers advised:

- the scheme costings included contingency costs of 65%, although those costs were expected to reduce significantly as the scheme was developed. Other potential sources of funding were being explored, which included a possible contribution from Network Rail;
- no estimate was available for the savings to be made by Network Rail by not having to operate the level crossing. There was an industry standard used to calculate such information, and any funding would be subject to negotiation with Network Rail;
- roundabouts usually cost between £1m and £1.8M. The construction cost estimates had been made by a contractor in a desktop exercise looking at ground conditions, but this did not include a more thorough technical assessment including sampling, bore holes, etc. It was confirmed that Location 3 was not higher risk technically than the other Locations, as there were technical difficulties with all three locations;
- that Location 3 was approximately 900 metres long, whilst Location 2 was 750 metres long;
- that they had been in touch with the Equestrian Centre, and confirmed that Location 3 would have a negative impact on that business, leading to separation between stabling and fields. This could be addressed by a crossing point beneath the flyover, but that particular element had not been costed in to the estimated costs.

Two public speakers spoke in support of Location 3:

Carl Sutton spoke as Managing Director of The Abbey Group, which was sited on the western side of railway line. He expressed strong support for Location 3, which would have numerous benefits to the local economy. His company's site employed over 200 people, and Locations 1 and 2 would have a devastating impact on those businesses, requiring them to move, or have access issues. In addition, Locations 1 and 2 would incur significant land acquisition costs. It was established that the land to the south of the eastern roundabout was owned by the brick company, and Mr Sutton confirmed that the current site was up to capacity, and using this land was an attractive option. In

response to a Member question, Mr Sutton outlined the wide range of businesses operating from the site.

Geoff Dennis, Whittlesey Plant Manager at McCain Foods GB, spoke on behalf of McCains. He also strongly supported Location 3, and opposed Locations 1 and 2, commenting that Location 3 represented a win/win scenario, encouraging economic growth by bridging the A605 and releasing the bottleneck.

In discussion, a Member advised that a Network Rail representative attending the Project Board had indicated a strong preference for Location 3, on the grounds that it would be easier for Network Rail to implement technically, and would cause less disruption to the line. A number of Members stressed the strategic importance of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail link, which already carried a vast amount of freight, and tonnages were set to increase further. This in turn would lead to greater downtime on the Level Crossing.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the results of the public consultation;
- b) approve the preparation and submission of a planning application for the recommended scheme at Location 3;
- c) approve procurement of the planning application, detailed design and construction of the scheme at Location 3 through an Early Contractor Involvement Design and Build Contract as detailed in Section 7 of the report; and
- d) approve the negotiation of land and rights acquisition required for the early delivery of the scheme at Location 3 and the preparation of Compulsory Purchase and Side Road Orders.

93. IMPLEMENTATION OF PARKING CHARGES AT CAMBRIDGE PARK AND RIDE SITES

The Committee considered a report on the recent implementation of parking charges at the five Cambridge Park and Ride sites. The report outlined issues that had arisen, and actions that had been taken or were planned to address those issues e.g. the reduction in patronage.

Members were advised that whilst there had been concerns that parking would displace onto neighbouring streets, no complaints had been received, and before and after surveys in Milton showed no significant change in on-street parking. However, officers advised the Committee that residents in Porson Road in Cambridge had expressed strong concerns on parking issues, suggesting that existing parking problems, caused by employees and students drivers parking, had worsened. These comments would be investigated further.

Arising from the report, Members:

- expressed disappointed in the lack of detail in Appendix 1 e.g.the time of day and day of week when there were issues, and whether these were commuting, leisure trips, etc. The Member suggested the Committee needed to better understand the reasons for changes in people's travel habits;
- asked whether the change to the access charge would have a revenue impact, and if so, whether this would need to be brought back to the Committee;
- queried the statement "... *there is still a perception that the machines are difficult or confusing to use*" commenting that it was disappointing that officers continued to suggest it was the users who were at fault, not the machines, when there was overwhelming evidence to suggest that users had problems using the machines. It was suggested that this could have been overcome with better publicity and simpler technology;
- expressed disappointment that only 15% of users had signed up for the online system, and asked whether incentives had been explored, and the "occasional user" option actively promoted. Officers acknowledged that the level of transactions on the online system was lower than hoped for. A concerted marketing campaign with Stagecoach was planned, to highlight why Park and Ride was such a good option;
- commented that users and residents had expressed disappointment on how slowly the Council had responded to the problems;
- queried the assertion that the scheme had not led to parking displacement – referencing that local councillors had received complaints;
- suggested that this was symptomatic of the problems with two tier local government, in that the County Council was pursuing revenue, and the City council was focusing on traffic management;
- commented that the Committee had opted for this solution mainly on the basis of officer advice, particularly on the additional revenue to be earned at a time of economic difficulty for the Council. However, the Member suggested that officers could have assisted the process by being upfront about how difficult the process would be. In terms of reflecting on lessons learned, the Member suggested officers should be more cautious on sharing their enthusiasm for such schemes, if their professional expertise suggested there could be complications, as the implications in this case for Members had been disastrous. Moreover, this presented a serious threat to the plans to extend Park and Ride schemes in the county;
- agreed that there needed to be a more joined-up approach with the City Council, but added that the economic life of Cambridge depended very much on those travelling into Cambridge, and suggested one option may be for Cambridge City Council to subsidise the Park and Ride car parks. Noting the reduction in patronage, the Member also asked what future trends in patronage officers were expecting, suggesting that it was unrealistic to expect the trend to reverse. Officers advised that the trend was flat – it had gone neither up nor down since the charges had been

introduced in July 2014. However, officers were keen for patronage to increase, as the number of people travelling in to Cambridge increased;

- expressed concerns over the tone of the report and the lack of emphasis on lessons learned, and the lack of some information e.g. the cost of the extra machines;
- discussed the user experience, commenting that it should be easier for people to pay: paying a £1 charge should be more straightforward;
- noted that unlike road toll schemes (e.g. the Dartford Tunnel), legally the payment for parking had to be enforced on site. However, like many toll systems, there were online paying options, and these needed greater promotion;
- noted that Smartcards were already used within Cambridgeshire e.g. concessionary fares, Guided Busway, but these were not an option for parking charges;
- noted that there would be a month long Easter campaign with Stagecoach to promote Park and Ride.

Responding to points raised, the Executive Director stressed that officers were keen to learn lessons from the implementation of the payment system. However, he did not feel that the machines were complicated, and an off-the-shelf system, used elsewhere in the country, had been used, rather than an expensive bespoke system. Officers welcomed ideas from Members on how the process could be simplified or made more user-friendly. He also suggested that the negative perception was mainly due to ongoing negative media coverage, and the debate needed to be rebalanced. He also stressed that there was close and ongoing working and cooperation between County and Cambridge City Council officers on this and many other issues. Previously the Park and Ride car parks, the only free-of-charge public car parks in Cambridge, had been effectively subsidised by the County Council to the cost of around £1M, which was unsustainable in the current financial climate. £4M of further cuts would be required across Economy, Transport & Environment in 2016/17. Over three million people were still using the Cambridge Park and Ride sites each year, and he was confident that this would increase.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the revenue raised by the charge to date;
- b) note the changes in ridership of the Park and Ride bus services since the charge was introduced (detailed in Appendix 1 of the report);
- c) note the customer feedback following the introduction of the parking charges;
- d) note the improvements that have been made to the system since it was implemented and the further actions planned; and
- e) comment on the process of implementation and lessons that can be learnt for the future;

- f) receive an update at the July Committee meeting.

94. ADULT LEARNING SKILLS AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

Members considered a self-assessment report on the authority's provision of Adult Learning and Skills Services. This self-assessment was required of the authority as a provider of Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funded activity, and had to be submitted to both the SFA, and Ofsted (who quality assure the work), in addition to officers and Members. The work of Adult Learning and Skills Services was currently rated as 'good' by Ofsted. Tracking progress and destination information, i.e. identifying where learners go, remained a challenge, but this was an issue for Adult Learning providers nationally.

Arising from the report, Members:

- welcomed the report, noting the pleasing positive feedback from learners, and the high rate of visitors on the website. In response to a question on gender balance, officers advised that around 80% of learners were female: engaging males in adult learning – especially young males – was a particular challenge;
- praised the work being undertaken, but requested more information on what was happening in Fenland. It was agreed that this would be circulated to the Committee.
ACTION: Lynsi Hayward-Smith;
- praised the service but suggested that take-up in areas such as St Neots should be increasing in proportion to the growth in those communities. Officers advised that nationally there was a decline in take-up, and in real terms the budget was shrinking;
- asked how many learners had been through the criminal justice system. Officers advised that learners were not asked to declare this information, but a significant number of ex-offenders were signposted to Adult Learning.

It was resolved unanimously to:

endorse the report.

95. PROPOSED 2015/16 TARGETS FOR ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT 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. Officers advised that the proposed targets were both challenging and realistic, and 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. It was also noted that it was not possible to measure the percentage of households and businesses using superfast broadband.

During 2015/16, Members would have the opportunity to fully review all Performance Indicators as part of the Business Plan process.

Arising from the report, Members:

- asked why the target for dealing with planning applications was 13 weeks, which seemed quite long. Officers explained that this was reflecting the reality of how long these planning applications took, as most were large and quite complex. The intention was to make good quality decisions based on good information rather than rushing applications through;
- noted a typographical error in the report: the proposed target for average journey time per mile during the morning peak on the most congested routes should be 3.7 minutes per mile, not 0.7 minutes;
- queried the validity of a 'contextual' target for Guided Busway passengers per month;
- discussed the issues around the inability to currently measure the percentage of households and businesses using superfast broadband, commenting that it would also be helpful to have an urban/rural split in this information. Members noted that the available speed in a particular location was not necessarily the speed the user received, as this was also reliant on (i) the distance of the property from the cabinet, (ii) the router supplied by the broadband provider and (iii) whether particular broadband providers took up the option of broadband capacity from certain exchanges, as it was not always commercially viable for them to do so. **ACTION: Graham Hughes to report back to the Committee on information available and the detailed reasons why it was not possible to report performance currently;**
- pointed out that numbers in employment would not reflect shifts from full-time to part-time employment. Officers confirmed that they could report the split between full-time and part-time;
- highlighted the divide between cycling in the City and South Cambridgeshire compared to other areas of the county, particularly Fenland, and suggested that there was considerable demand for cycleways in other areas of the county and there should be greater focus on those areas. Officers explained the difficulties securing funding for cycle schemes in Fenland: the DfThad turned down funding for Fenland schemes because there were insufficient cyclists, so it was a no-win situation.

It was agreed that there would be a further report to the March Committee meeting, which would pick up issues raised on the ratio between part-time and full-time jobs, cycling patronage, Park and Ride charges and superfast broadband.

It was resolved unanimously to:

1. approve the proposed 2015/16 targets for Economy and Environment key indicators as set out in Appendix A to the report;

2. request a further report to the Committee meeting in March, to include the additional targets proposed by the Committee.

97. SERVICE COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

The following changes to the Agenda Plan were provided by Democratic Services:

- Commercialisation of Park & Ride sites (scheduled for March 2015) was now a key decision;
- Additional report to March 2015 meeting on ETE Risk Register;
- Special meeting on 14th May no longer required: the A14 item would now be considered on 26th May.

The following additions were agreed to the agenda plan:

- a further update on the Cambridge Park & Ride sites (July 2015);
- Update on Ely Southern Bypass (November 2015);
- Congestion Issues in Cambridge – progress report (June 2015).

It was resolved to:

note the Agenda Plan as amended with oral updates provided at the meeting

96. NORTHSTOWE: PHASE 2 OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION – DRAFT CONSULTATION RESPONSE AND POTENTIAL SECTION 106 REQUIREMENTS

The Committee received a report on the issues arising from the County Council consultation response on the Northstowe Phase 2 outline planning application. The report also set out the initial list of County Council Section 106 requirements for Northstowe Phase 2. It was noted that the original aim was for the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee (NJDCC) to determine the application in July 2015. However, the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) had recently indicated a desire for an earlier determination, on 25th March, which was a very challenging timescale.

Officers outlined current areas of concern and negotiation, which included a number of holding objections on a range of issues including transport, parking provision, cycling provision and education.

Councillor Mason spoke as a Local Member for Cottenham, Histon and Impington, and raised the following points:

- he did not feel that the 25th March deadline was achievable, or that the Council should give into such pressure that the HCA was imposing on local authorities;
- he expressed concern about the ‘unguided’ bus route, asking if it would be like Orchard Park, or a fully adoptable road for some sections?
- similarly, he felt that parking provision was a critical point for the authority, and lessons must be learned from Orchard Park, and at least two parking spaces per household provided;
- with regard to cycling provision, he stressed need to be aware of the future maintenance requirements of cycleways, especially in rural areas;

- he expressed concerns on water management and drainage – need to completely review the way in which this will be delivered, and not have a fragmented approach.

Members raised the following points:

- a Member noted the plans to build seven storey buildings, and pointed out that this would need a lot of car parking spaces. Officers advised that seven storeys was considered reasonable for this town centre by the quality panel, and consideration had been given to landscape, neighbours, urban design, as well as the existing community at Rampton Drift;
- Members pointed out that car spaces should be accessible, preferably on the curtilage of houses, but not behind them. Officers advised that parking strategies would have to be submitted as development come forward;
- a number of Members raised the issue of affordable housing and demographics, noting that clarity was needed at an early stage on the proportion of affordable housing, as this could have a tremendous effect on the services required e.g. education, parking. Officers advised that the level of affordable housing was indeed important and also impacted the education needs of a development, and that they used sophisticated modelling techniques to predict child yields, etc. It was noted that South Cambridgeshire District Council's affordable housing policy was 40% *subject to viability*, and some Members commented that this was an excellent opportunity to really increase the stock of affordable housing around Cambridge. It was also stressed that a high proportion of this affordable housing should be *social* housing. The Service Director commented that it was really helpful to have these comments from Members from all parties, as it was a good bargaining tool in negotiations with HCA and the District Council;
- a Member highlighted the importance of designing town centres that had viability i.e. real life and character, as opposed to a massive housing estate;
- it was clarified that the County Council's role was to provide a formal statutory planning response back to the District Council. It would then be up to NorthstoweJDCC if the application was sufficient in planning terms, and Members of that Committee feel they were able to approve application;
- a Member asked about the provision of a dentist at Northstowe, explaining that he understood that whilst GP facilities were planned for in new developments, dentists were not, as they were seen as commercial enterprises. Officers confirmed that health provision should be included in Phase 2, explaining that for in Phase 1 there was some provision for health workers to be based in the spare rooms of primary school, and the Longstanton GP surgery to deal with the early residents. Officers agreed to follow up on the issue of dentistry provision;
- a Member asked that cycling provision was included at an early stage, and was not an afterthought. Officers reassured Members that cycling provision was already very high up their agenda, with some very aspirational standards including (i) to European standards on the High Street (ii) dedicated cycle lanes on primary and secondary routes; (iii) linking to Oakington village – there would be provision on the

southern link road (Airport Road) and Phase 3 will be dedicated cycle link using existing Busway through Oakington;

- noted that the new schools (two primary schools and a secondary school) were required, by government policy, to be either Academies or Free Schools. A Member pointed out that this tied into the affordability aspect: staff needed to be able to afford local properties;
- a number of Members raised the issue of timing of facilities, e.g. GP surgeries, stressing that it was important to ensure that such facilities were not provided too late, otherwise people will get used to travelling.
- noted that there was no provision of public arts or cultural strategies, and suggested that the response could be strengthened by including this in section 2.3 (Heritage Strategy).

Members agreed to move into confidential session before considering the draft list of Cambridgeshire County Council Section 106 requirements:

It was resolved unanimously:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the confidential appendix for item 8 on the grounds that it is likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information under paragraph 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12 A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that it would not be in the public interest for the information to be disclosed (information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

It was resolved to:

- a) consider and approve the County Council's consultation response to the Northstowe Phase 2 outline planning application;
- b) consider and approve the draft list of County Council Section 106 requirements for Northstowe Phase 2 to be taken forward for negotiation (note: these are the subject of a confidential annex and the discussion of them will be confidential);
- c) delegate to the Executive Director: Economy, Transport and Environment in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Economy and Environment Committee the authority to make any minor textual changes to the consultation response prior to submission

98. DATE OF NEXT MEETING 10AM 10th MARCH 2015

Noted.

Chairman
10th March 2015