

**A428/A421 ALLIANCE**

**To:** Economy and Environment

**Meeting Date:** 13th January 2014

**From:** Executive Director for Economy, Transport & Environment

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Forward Plan ref:** Not applicable      **Key decision:** No

**Purpose:** To update members on key issues for the A428 and recent announcements regarding investment for the route. This includes progress with establishing an A428/A421 Alliance of partners and for member nominations for the Alliance

**Recommendation:**

- a) To note progress with establishing an A428/A421 Alliance to lobby for improvements on the route;
- b) To note investment plans for dualling the A428 and plans for a study into potential for an expressway from Cambridge to Oxford and;
- c) To nominate two representatives from Cambridgeshire County Council for the Alliance

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire County Council and our partners have long campaigned for improvements to the A428 Cambridge to Bedford route, which continues to the M1 and Milton Keynes as the A421.
- 1.2 One of the main areas of this route which needs addressing is a key middle section. This is the only remaining single carriageway section from Caxton Gibbet to St Neot's where the route then joins the A1 to the Black Cat roundabout. This regularly experiences severe traffic delays, and rat running through neighbouring towns and villages. With significant growth of more than 20,000 homes planned along the route to 2031, problems will worsen unless improvements are made;
- 1.3 The recently adopted Cambridgeshire Long Term Transport Strategy suggested that a new offline alignment (i.e. a new A428) from the Caxton Gibbet roundabout to the Black Cat roundabout, combined with grade separation of both roundabouts would significantly improve conditions and facilitate planned growth in the corridor.
- 1.4 Additional improvements are proposed at the Cambridge end of the corridor, where, a segregated bus link (either on or off line) from the A428 at Caxton Gibbet connecting West Camborne, Cambourne & Bourne is proposed to facilitate major growth plans. However the modelling shows that additional highway capacity referred to above in paragraph 1.2 will be needed, as well as these improvements, to enable more people to travel by sustainable transport alternatives.
- 1.5 Some £9m has been provisionally allocated from Government's Growth Deal funding towards public transport improvements on the A428 corridor from 2016 onwards provided that there is a strong business case. Work has begun on options to help inform proposals for bus priority improvements for the Cambridge end to address the pinchpoint from the A428 into Cambridge.
- 1.6 The Highways Agency (HA) is responsible for the A428 and is developing Route Strategies by March 2015. The A428 is included as part of the corridor in the Felixstowe to the Midlands strategy. The Route Strategies will establish investment priorities for all routes on the strategic road network from March 2015 to 2021 and give an indication of priorities beyond 2021. Therefore local partners have been working with the HA to ensure that the A428 is not overlooked given the current problems, the scale of growth proposed and investment needed for this route to function effectively.
- 1.7 An announcement was made by Government on 2<sup>nd</sup> December regarding plans for £15bn investment as part of the Highways Agency Road Investment Strategy (RIS) to 2021. This outlines areas where investment is going to be made. The inclusion of *'Dualling of the A428 to create a continuous 'expressway' from Cambridge to Bedford and Milton Keynes, to support of the growth of some of the fastest-growing towns and cities in the corridor'* is indeed most welcome. This includes A428: *'dualling of remaining single carriageway section between Caxton Gibbet west of Cambridge and the M1, including a grade separated junction at the A1 Black Cat roundabout'*.

- 1.8 The Investment Strategy points to this scheme being likely to come forward towards the end of the Investment period 2020/21 and being likely to take some 5 years to develop and deliver and cost in the region of £250 -500m.
- 1.9 In addition to this planned investment, an Oxford to Cambridge Expressway Study is planned to consider how a continuous 'expressway' might be created from Cambridge to Bedford and Milton Keynes. The study will focus on the case for extending this expressway from Milton Keynes to Oxford.
- 1.10 It should be noted that many of the schemes announced as part of the RIS are early in the development cycle. Their final costs and delivery schedule will be dependent on detailed design and factors such as progress through the planning process. The HA has only given indicative assumptions on both costs and timings, within bands, but these may be subject to change as schemes are further developed. Overall, the funding commitment of £15.2bn of capital investment between 2015/16 and 2020/21 is expected to stand, and Government has said that this will not decrease if schemes are delivered under their expected budget.

## **2 UPDATE ON PROGRESS WITH PARTNERS & ESTABLISHING AN ALLIANCE**

- 2.1 Members agreed back in October to join forces with partners to lobby from a corridor perspective for improvements to the A428 and A421, as proved most successful by the A14 Consortium and the A47 Alliance.
- 2.2 This was following years of individual lobbying and a motion approved in September where Councillor Harty called for Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs to work with committee members to:
- seek a commitment from Government and the Highways Agency that comprehensive improvements will be prioritised for the A428 to enable it to perform effectively as a strategic east west link
  - develop an A428 alliance with our key partners including neighbouring authorities, the Highways Agency and local members of parliament to lobby government for early investment and improvements on the A428 to support continued growth and prosperity.
- 2.3 Good progress has been made on both of these aims; Partners agreed to establish an Alliance which was launched on 3rd October 2014. This was well attended with partners from across the length of the corridor, and subsequent to this, other partners joined the Alliance and include the following;

Jonathan Djanogly MP  
Alistair Burt MP  
Sir James Paice MP  
Andrew Lansley MP  
Ian Stewart MP  
Mark Lancaster MP  
Richard Fuller MP  
Alistair Burt - MP

Cllr Jason Ablewhite - Executive Leader of Huntingdonshire District Council  
Cllr Ray Manning - Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council  
Cllr James Jamieson - Leader of Central Bedfordshire County Council  
TBC Cambridgeshire County Council  
TBC - Cambridge City Council  
Neil Darwin - Chief Executive of Greater Cambridgeshire Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership  
Dr Ann Limb - Chairman of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership  
Mayor Dave Hodgson - Mayor of Bedford Borough  
Mr Philip Simpkins - Chief Executive Bedford Borough Council  
Mr Michael Anderson - Brown Cambridge & South Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce  
Mr Ishwer Gohil - Milton Keynes Council  
Mr Peter Grimm - Suffolk County Council  
Mr Dave Cumming - Norfolk County Council  
Mr Andy Mercer - Northamptonshire County Council

- 2.4 At the launch meeting, all agreed that the Alliance would act as a lobby group of key partners from County and District Councils as well as MP's from Parliament and Local Enterprise Partnerships along the length of the corridor. Jonathan Djanogly MP was elected as Chair of this group and the objectives of the Alliance were agreed as follows:
- To build a compelling case for improvements to the route to support economic growth, locally and nationally.
  - To work with the Highways Agency to develop a comprehensive improvement package and associated investment plan, which will:
    - Address current capacity constraints.
    - Provide capacity for future growth and prosperity.
    - Improve safety.
    - Improve the reliability of journey times.
  - To work together to make the case for improvements to government.
- 2.5 In addition, the Chairman held various meetings with Ministers and the Secretary of State to raise the profile of the A428 and lobby for improvements. Letters were also sent from the Chairman of our Economy and Environment Committee to the Secretary of State and the Chairman of the Highways Agency. We are most pleased with the positive responses and inclusion of the A428 dualling proposal in the HA's Investment Strategy to 2021, and will be arranging for a meeting of partners with the Highways Agency early in the new year to progress plans for the improvement scheme.
- 2.6 However, it must be borne in mind that the proposal is at a very early stage, and there is a very long list of commitments for the £15bn, with limited resources. Therefore, there are real risks and unless early progress is made on developing a deliverable scheme which demonstrates good value for money that this could scheme could become miss out on funding or become unaffordable within existing funding envelopes.
- 2.7 Given the long lead in times for developing major schemes, early progress needs to be made working with the Alliance and the HA on developing options and a deliverable

scheme for 2020. Officers are scheduling a meeting in January, and it is anticipated that the Alliance will meet to discuss a draft programme in February.

- 2.8 Members are asked to note progress and to nominate two Cambridgeshire County Council representatives for the Alliance.

### **3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

#### **3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

The A428 is a key east west route connecting Cambridge with Bedford, Milton Keynes and the midlands, and the planned improvement will help improve accessibility and help facilitate the significant growth planned on this corridor to come forward.

#### **3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

Improving accessibility on this key route should enhance links for some of the fastest growing towns in the region and help improve opportunities for our communities in general.

#### **3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

No significant implications identified.

### **4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Resource Implications**

The A428 is the responsibility of the Highways Agency who will cover the improvement costs of the proposed dualling which is estimated at between £250 - £500m. However it must be borne in mind that the proposal is at a very early stage, and there is a very long list of commitments for the £15bn,. Therefore, there are real risks and unless early progress is made on developing a deliverable scheme which demonstrates good value for money that this could scheme could become miss out on funding or become unaffordable within existing funding envelopes.

#### **4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

The A428 is the responsibility of the Highways Agency and while this scheme is a commitment currently, this depends on early progress being made on developing a deliverable scheme which demonstrates good value for money, and resources being available. Partners will work with the Highways Agency to help progress the development of the scheme; however the delivery of the scheme will be dependent on ensuring a strong business case is in place along with planning approvals in order to commence delivery during 2020.

#### **4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications**

No significant implications identified.

#### 4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

The scheme is at a very early stage and the Highways Agency will need to work with partners to develop options and consult with the public at key stages in the development of a scheme.

#### 4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Nominated Local Authority leads are involved in the Alliance and there is expected to be extensive public engagement at key stages as the scheme is developed.

#### 4.6 Public Health Implications

No significant implications.

Source Documents	Location
<i>Government Announcement on Highways Agency Investment Strategy</i>	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-roads-investment-in-the-east-of-england">https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-roads-investment-in-the-east-of-england</a>
<i>Cambridgeshire Long Term Transport Strategy</i>	<a href="http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20006/travel_roads_and_parking/66/transport_plans_and_policies/5">http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20006/travel_roads_and_parking/66/transport_plans_and_policies/5</a>