

HIGHWAYS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY AND SERVICE COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 11th September 2018

Time: 10:00- 12:10

Present: Councillors I Gardener, M Howell, L Harford, B Hunt (Vice-Chairman), S King, T Sanderson and M Shuter (Chairman)

Apologies: Councillor D Jenkins, substituted by Councillor L Nethsingha
Councillor A Taylor, substitute for Councillor L Dupre
Councillor J Scutt, substituted by Councillor N Kavanagh

74.APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were noted as recorded above. There were no declarations of interest.

75. MINUTES AND ACTION LOG

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2018 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

The Action Log was reviewed and the following updates noted:

- i. A Member asked why a reference to the new Performance Indicators was not included on the Action Log. Officers stated that a report on Performance Indicators would be brought to the next meeting. **ACTION**
- ii. Minute 69: Finance and Performance Report: Officers confirmed that the additional detail would be included in future reports as requested.
- iii. Minute 73: Agenda Plan, Training Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies: Work to check the Clay Farm Centre Advisory Group Appointment was in hand and officers would report back to Councillor A Taylor as requested.

76.PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Committee received a petition with over 500 signatures collected from local residents in Huntingdon. The petition requested the opening of the link road Parkway to Kingfisher Way, Hinchingsbrooke, Huntingdon. The petition organiser Councillor John Morris of Huntingdonshire District Council, was unable to attend in person so with the Chairman's permission the petition was presented by Councillor Tom Sanderson. Councillor Sanderson stated that residents were concerned that the Hinchingsbrooke Park area was too congested for residents and workers at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital trying to leave and that the problem was only going to get worse when 100 new homes were built on the former forensic site by Persimmon Homes.

Members asked the following questions and made the following comments:

- A Member asked whether the proposed link road was on private land and whether the owner of the land has been contacted and informed about the public concerns. Councillor Sanderson stated that the owner had been approached and had expressed concerns about site security;
- A Member suggested that the public should be informed that these proposed changes may cause an increase in 'rat running' through the estate and might not alleviate congestion. Councillor Sanderson suggested that consideration could be given to making it one-way traffic leading off of the estate only. Any change could be trialled and its impact assessed.
- A Member suggested creating another route further down the A14 which could help alleviate the congestion problem present in the area.

The Chairman invited Councillor Downes to address the Committee in his capacity as a local Member. With the Chairman's permission, Councillor Downes handed out photographs to highlight the Hinchingsbrooke area. (copy attached at Appendix 1). He stated that the Hinchingsbrooke area contained over 1000 homes, a school, a police station and a hospital. This had led to traffic jams due to the large amount of people in the Hinchingsbrooke area. Councillor Downes stated that discussions about possible solutions were taking place with Highways England. He asked that the Committee authorise officers to investigate opening up Kingfisher Way as a short-term improvement.

The Chairman stated that officers would provide Councillor Morris with a written response to his petition within ten working days of the meeting.

The Chairman stated that he had accepted a public question relating to the Library Transformation item. He invited Antony Carpen to address the Committee.

Mr Carpen suggested that the history of Cambridge City had not been fully researched and that we know much more about the history of villages in Cambridgeshire. He stated that he had been researching the history of Cambridge and had found documents, photos and cartoons highlighting Cambridge history. Mr Carpen suggested that the cartoons and photographs could be digitalised and with help of a specialist, be used as a source of revenue for the Council.

The Chairman thanked Mr Carpen for doing this research and stated that it's a fantastic area of research and could help the library service pay for itself while expanding the knowledge of the public. He asked officers to engage with Mr Carpen on his proposal. **ACTION**

77. Library Service Transformation

The committee considered an update report on the package of improvements to the Library Service and was asked to note the ongoing programme of work to transform the Library Service.

A short presentation was played to the Committee to highlight the importance of the Library team and how important mobile libraries are to the community. This can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iz6MOyMA4sQ>

The head of the library service noted that the libraries in Cambridgeshire were busy and vibrant spaces. During the previous six weeks they had hosted visits by the Chief Executive of the Arts Council, the Local Government Association and Michael Ellis MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, all of whom had given a positive response to the Cambridgeshire approach.

For increasing the income for the library service, officers were looking to recruit a business officer who would be given the task of helping to acquire external funding for the service, however so far they had not been able to appoint anyone. The Head of the Library Service described the scheme to charge some library users for internet use. The charge was £1 per hour but the first 30 minutes were free. This charge does not apply to under 18s and concessionary users. With this charge in place since the 1st May 2018 computer usage had dropped by 53.71% from 40,909 hours to 18,937 hours (a drop of 50% had been predicted). This charge had already made £4,000 in the first 3 months and was expected to reach £16,000 by the end of the year. However this sum was significantly less than the £108,000 projected.

Members asked the following questions and made the following comments:

- A Member asked whether the mobile libraries would have a wider range of services in the future. Officers stated that they were working with organisations to try and have blood pressure tests, diabetes tests, weight checks and to sell devices to 'make life easier' such as devices to unscrew jars for older individuals.
- Paragraph 4.4: A Member asked what sort of opportunities this was referring to. The Head of the Library Service stated that an external non-profit organisation called Civic was offering an initial sum of £50,000 to support the Library Service, with the possibility of a further donation in the future;
- The Vice Chairman asked whether library staff were allowed to exercise their discretion in relation to computer access, as they would be best placed to judge their customers' needs. Officers confirmed that this was the case;
- A Member commended the expansion of the mobile library services offer and asked whether all additional services being provided were commercially viable. Officers confirmed that they were;

- Officers confirmed that they had been asked to look at the possibility of extending the opening hours of Soham library. The Vice Chairman suggested that the Neighbourhood Cares organisation which operated out of the library building could be involved in supporting extended opening hours whilst they had people on site. Officers agreed to explore this further, both in relation to Soham library and more widely; **ACTION**
- A Member raised concerns about the decreased use of computers in libraries following the introduction of charging. They wanted to know who no longer used the service because of the charge. Officers stated that anecdotal evidence suggested a decline in the use of library computers for recreational and entertainment purposes and for using social media. Several Members expressed concern that this might lead to an increase in social isolation for some people;
- A Member asked whether records were being kept of the numbers of computers in use and the numbers which were idle. Officers undertook to find out and report back; **ACTION**
- A Member noted the difficulty which had been encountered in recruiting a business development officer and commented that it must be increasingly difficult to identify new and innovative ideas. Officers stated that there were still lots of ideas both locally and nationally which merited investigation, and that the business development officer would also have a key role in building relationships with potential sponsors;

The Chairman stated that he was very impressed with the dedication of the library staff and was happy with the ideas coming forward. Libraries had become a central hub for communities and were a real success story. It was a concern that income generation was not yet what had been hoped given the importance of securing the financial future of the county's libraries, but many options were still evolving.

Arising from discussion of the report:

- Several Members commented on their positive experience of libraries within their Divisions and on the range and quality of services being provided;
- Paragraph 3.16: A Member commented that the annual variance was greater than the income generated by charging for computer access. A second Member commented that there was no justification for keeping the charge when the income generated was so low. Anything which supported people's social inclusion should be supported, with social isolation being recognised as one of the main predictors for health and social care need;
- A Member raised concerns about the effectiveness of the library service and how it could positively support their communities. They commented that libraries were not reaching the people who needed it and only reaching a certain demographic in the county;

- A Member commented that the free use of computers enhanced people's social lives and involved them with the library;
- A Member commented that they were not a great fan of having computers in libraries. They felt that the hardware tended to be relatively outdated and that it was used predominantly by retired people with comfortable financial circumstances rather than those who needed it most. This view was disputed by several Members who described the positive impact of library services across a variety of user groups and commented on the positive benefits of internet access for non-utilitarian purposes;
- Members welcomed the exemptions from charging available to concessionary computer users and the discretion allowed to library staff to support extended free access for those who needed it. However, some Members remained concerned about the impact on service users from lower income households who would still be liable to pay the charge;
- A Member commented that the Library Service was leading the way in transforming service delivery and that they would be reluctant to reverse the decision to introduce charging prematurely without having a fuller understanding of the impact of the change. However, they were concerned about those people no longer using library computers and internet access and would like to know more about the impact which charging for these services was having on former users. If the charges were resulting in increased social isolation they would want to have the opportunity to revisit the decision. A second Member endorsed this view and suggested the Committee request a further review in six months' time to review the developing position in the light of the concerns expressed;

It was proposed by Councillor Dupre, seconded by Councillor Nethsingha, that, 'The charge for computer access should cease.' On being put to the vote, the resolution was defeated.

Summing up, the Chairman stated that it had always been the Committee's intention to continue to monitor the impact of the introduction of charging for computer and internet access in libraries. There were understandable concerns that this was not yet generating the income predicted, but it was too soon to decide to reverse the decision to introduce charging. A further report in six months would allow sufficient time for the change to bed in and for the concerns expressed by Members to be fully explored.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the ongoing programme of work to transform the Library Service;
 - b) note the progress towards generating new revenue;
 - c) request a further report in March 2019 containing more detail and analysis of computer usage in libraries and looking at the specific concerns raised by Members
- ACTION**

78. Road Safety across Cambridgeshire

The Committee considered a proposal outlining the digitalisation of existing safety cameras across Cambridgeshire.

The Interim Highway Projects and Road Safety Service Manager recommended that the safety cameras which detect speed and red light offences in Cambridgeshire should be upgraded to digital cameras. This would cost £500- 600k and would be in partnership with the Police and Peterborough City Council. He noted that the current wet film technology is becoming obsolete and that the cameras still have a role to play as part of the road safety agenda.

In discussion:

- A Member welcomed the proposed upgrade and asked whether any of the current or proposed cameras were in locations with a 20mph speed limit and, if so, could the cameras be used to detect motorists exceeding that limit. Officers stated that only one camera was in a 20mph speed limit area and it was proposed that this would be decommissioned. There would be a process of monitoring and consultation around the decommissioning process, but the existing cameras could not be used at 20mph;
- The Chairman asked whether it was legal and possible to set the current 30mph cameras to detect 20mph. Officers confirmed this was the case, but that only some cameras were capable of being adjusted in this way. This requirement could be included in the procurement exercise. The Chairman stated that it would be sensible to explore this;
- Members suggested that it would be prudent for it to be made explicit in the recommendations that the Committee's decisions were subject to the outcome of discussions about funding which would take place at the Police and Crime Commissioner's Board meeting on Thursday;
- The Chairman asked that the officers come back next year with an increased analysis of the sites and research how relevant the cameras were in reducing the rate of serious crashes. **ACTION**
- Officers stated that they were working with the Police and Peterborough City Council in order to attain the funding needed. Officers stated that to postpone the decision would mean that cameras would no longer be supported and would not function;
- A Member questioned why there was only one camera in East Cambridgeshire and it was proposed that this would be removed. Another Member expressed longstanding concerns regarding the siting of a camera on the Huntingdon Road. Officers stated that speed cameras were located according to set criteria and so the number of cameras per District would be dependent on this. To protect the credibility of safety cameras as road safety tools rather than an income generation stream it was important that their

locations were set using an objective and transparent process. Accident cluster site data was routinely reviewed to feed into this process;

- In response to a question about whether the new cameras would be cheaper to operate officers stated that this would be dependent on the type purchased. 'Wet film' required an officer to go out to the site to collect it for processing, but digital cameras had costs associated with data collection and storage. Final costs could exceed the current budget, but officers were working with the Police and Crime Commissioner's office to explore contingency arrangements;
- A Member commented that the Committee's duty was to focus on road safety and they did not feel that the report explored alternative options which might be cheaper. The Executive Director stated that evidence showed safety cameras to be highly effective road safety tools. The Police supported their use and the Council was working with the police to fund them. Significant analysis had been undertaken and existing cameras would not be supported and so would no longer be operational if they were not replaced;
- The Chairman stated that the Road Safety Partnership looked in detail at this information. The accident report was next due to come to Committee in March 2019 and this could include more analysis of the impact of safety cameras.

ACTION

- In reference to appendix 2 section 49 one Member suggested that the Cherry Hinton road area is very busy around the hospital and stressed the importance of this camera and wants it to be left at 20mph rather than it being removed. The officer replied to this and stated that the camera can't be used at 20 and that particular site will be reviewed once the camera is removed.
- One Member queried whether we could use dummy cameras and if they did would that improve road safety? The officer suggested that yes safety cameras do have a positive effect and that they do have dummy cameras as some existing cameras have stopped working so are rendered ineffective.
- One Member told the committee that Northamptonshire County Council had a different result when they used dummy cameras, however he suggested that this was down to the fact that the Council told the public they were shutting them down. The officer in response to this suggested to the committee that they must take into account their credibility when using dummy cameras.

It was resolved by a majority:

- a) to approve the suggested approach to the digitalisation of the county's safety cameras as outlined in Appendix 2 to the report;
- b) to approve the commencement of procurement to upgrade the county's safety cameras as outlined in section 2.2 of the report;
- c) to delegate authority to award the contract to the Executive Director, Place & Economy in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee;
- d) to approve the allocation of the Council's Road Safety Capital Scheme funding in 2019/20 for the upgrade of the county's safety cameras, if required, as outlined in section 2.3 of the report.
- e) that all of the above were subject to the approval of the funding options being considered by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Business Co-ordination Board on 13 September 2018.

79. Finance and Performance Report- July 2018

Officers reported two significant revenue pressures relating to the Coroners Service and Waste, although some underspends were now coming through in relation to concessionary fares which would help mitigate the position. Capital project slippage of £530k was forecast in relation to Library schemes funded through developer contributions, including Cambourne and Darwin Green Libraries. Members asked for a note setting out more information on this. **ACTION** Two of the nine key performance indicators (KPIs) were currently classed as red.

A Member commented that it had been agreed previously that the Finance and Performance Report would be taken as an earlier item on the agenda and asked that this should be done. **ACTION**

The following comments arose in discussion of the report and in response to questions from Members:

- The sooner that new Performance Indicators could be put in place the better;
- In response to a question relating to Kings Dyke, the Executive Director stated that the position remained broadly unchanged. There would be a two stage tender process and the final cost was likely to be significantly higher than originally thought so officers were working with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to explore how this might be funded. Responsibility for the project rested with the Economy and Environment Committee and a report was due to be considered in October 2018;
- West Hunts Link Road: Final valuations would take some time to come through, but this was usual with projects of this type. It was expected to come in within budget;
- Money from the Pothole Action Fund was distributed across District areas and highways officers worked with local Members on projects;

- A Member requested more information about the red KPI relating to the number of people killed or seriously injured casualties and whether any improvement was expected; the size of the Ely Bypass revenue overspend and the split between the Pothole Fund and highway maintenance funding. Officers undertook to provide a note. **ACTION**
- The Executive Director stated that the revenue pressure relating to Waste was disappointing, but that whilst there was some risk associated with this the overall position was still positive;

It was resolved to:

- a) Review, note and comment on the report.

80.AGENDA PLAN, TRAINING PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members reviewed the agenda plan and training plan and offered the following comments:

- A report was requested on how traffic on the A1123 had been affected by the opening of the Ely Bypass, including initial feedback (anecdotal if necessary) on the impact on reducing traffic levels through the surrounding villages. Officers stated that this would fall within the remit of the Environment and Economy Committee, but that this information could be shared with this Committee. **ACTION** The Vice Chairman also asked that consideration should be given to a sign to avoid Witcham, Haddenham and Stretham. **ACTION**
- A Member had recently attended a seminar on the A14 which had been very good and suggested inviting a member of the A14 project team to a future Members' Seminar. **ACTION**

It was resolved to:

- a) review the agenda plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report, including the updates provided orally at the meeting;
- b) review the training plan attached at Appendix 2 to the report;

