

Highways and Transport Committee: Minutes

Date: 21 January 2025

Time: 10.00 a.m. to 12:50 p.m.

Venue: Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall

Present: Councillors Alex Beckett (Chair), Neil Shailer (Vice-Chair), Piers Coutts, Claire Daunton, Lorna Dupré, Jan French, Ian Gardener, Bryony Goodliffe, Neil Gough, Anne Hay, Bill Hunt, Simon King, Peter McDonald, Tom Sanderson, and Alan Sharp

252. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gerri Bird (Councillor Goodliffe attended as a substitute).

There were no declarations of interest.

253. Minutes – 3 December 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

While reviewing the Minutes Action Log, Members:

- Noted that the Collision Cluster Sites and International Road Assessment Programme report, scheduled to be presented to the committee at its meeting on 4 March 2025, would include an assessment of the A1421, as detailed in the update to the first action related to Minute 239 (Highways and Transport Committee Agenda Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies).
- Confirmed that the engagements referred to in the two updates to the actions related to Minute 247 (Active Travel Hierarchy Consultation and Development), were the same engagement on the Public Rights of Way maintenance hierarchy.
- Argued that more work could be undertaken by the Council on the Wisbech Access Study, and it was agreed to provide Members with a briefing note on the matter.

Action required

- Suggested that the status of actions on the action log could provide further context on the status beyond either 'ongoing' or 'complete', although it was highlighted that all the actions had an update alongside the status, which provided further context and included future schedules, actions or dates, where appropriate. It was also noted that the action log served as a means of tracking commitments made by officers at meetings, rather than as a means of communicating information.

The Committee noted the Minutes Action Log.

254. Petitions and Public Questions

The Committee was informed that no public questions or petitions had been received.

255. Business Plan and Budget 2025/26 – 2029/30

The Committee received a report on the Council's draft 2025-30 business plan and budget, with a focus on the services and responsibilities within the committee's remit, before it was scheduled to be presented to the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on 28 January 2025 and Full Council on 11 February 2025. The report also set out the fees and charges schedule for the committee.

While discussing the draft business plan and budget, individual Members:

- Paid tribute to officers for developing and proposing the business plan and budget in a challenging financial climate, and for identifying efficiency savings over the past year which had saved a significant level of resources. Members also highlighted the extensive support provided by Local Highway Officers, noting how important they were in enabling Members to support local initiatives and concerns.
- Welcomed the additional funding that had been provided by the government, highlighting the number of highways maintenance issues that needed resolving in all areas of the country.
- Highlighted the popularity of the Local Highway Improvement programme and paid tribute to the extensive involvement of local communities and parish councils in submitting project bids, as well as the support provided by the Council's officers throughout the process. Notwithstanding, it was suggested that the programme could benefit from additional funding to allow more projects to be carried out, and Members were informed that the Council would consider allocating additional funding both for projects themselves and for additional capacity to further support the development and delivery of projects.
- Emphasised the importance of white line markings and clarified that £500k had been allocated from the £20m capital investment in highways maintenance, with an annual review assessing the programme. Members expressed concern that this would not be sufficient, although it was noted that additional revenue resources supported reactive maintenance of issues including white line markings.
- Expressed concern that the proposed £500k allocation for road safety was insufficient, although it was emphasised that most of the highway maintenance work carried out under the £20m budget was effectively for improving road safety, while individual schemes were also developed in areas where there were safety issues.

- Highlighted significant issues with peat soil affected roads and expressed concern about the proposal to reduce capital investment on them from £3m to £2m, although it was noted that the reduction reflected additional funding that had been allocated the previous year as a one-off investment to cover extra work.
- Noted that responsibility for the management of bus shelters was split between the Council, the Combined Authority and parish councils, and suggested that the Council could provide additional financial resources for their maintenance as part of its wider support of and encouragement for bus services.
- Sought clarification on the levels of inflation that were anticipated for the forthcoming year and how inflation was considered in the business planning and budget process. Members were informed that the Council estimated the potential impact of inflation throughout the budget process, with the highways budget in particular using an index that focused on typically impacted factors, such as contractual terms and construction costs. Attention was drawn to Table 3 on page 43 of the agenda, which set out different elements of anticipated inflation over the next five years and how it was proposed to address them.
- Highlighted the importance of supporting active travel in rural areas and queried whether the Council planned to allocate additional funding following the completion of the Active Travel 4 programme, which was funded by funding from the government, via the Combined Authority. Members were informed that resources could be allocated from the recently confirmed additional funding from the government. It was also noted that the Active Travel Hierarchy would be presented to the committee at its meeting on 4 March 2025, which would support the prioritisation process for identifying issues and allocating resources.
- Emphasised the need to increase capacity of the various highways teams, to reduce their workload and pressure while also improving the Council's performance and ability to respond to issues.
- Welcomed the Gaist data that had been collected and highlighted how it enabled the prioritisation of resources to be allocated to roads and footpaths it had identified. Members were informed that condition surveys were carried out annually, with additional investment supporting an increased number of surveys. Countywide surveys of the complete road and footpath networks would be completed by Quarter 1 in the next financial year, which would feed into the capital prioritisation process. It was also being considered how Members could be kept informed of information related to their local area.
- Argued that issues raised by members of the public, such as potholes, needed to be acknowledged, responded to and resolved in a more timely manner than was currently the case. Noted that a new asset management system would be implemented in Quarter 1 of the new financial year, which would bring efficiencies and improve performance, particular in the speed and manner that customer enquiries were responded to. It would also resolve many issues with the current twenty-year-old system, such as cases being closed before they had been resolved.

- Drew attention to the importance of ensuring the implementation of highways-related improvements that were included as conditions to planning permission and queried whether the Council had sufficient capacity to participate in the development of such conditions and subsequently in their enforcement. Members were informed that the business plan proposed additional investment to the Highways Development team, which would allow for its capacity to be increased, further increasing the revenue accrued by the team's work in such areas. It was also noted that the Council had tightened its governance processes around Section 106 and Section 278 agreements to ensure developers were held to account for such planning conditions.
- Highlighted the importance of cutting back trees and vegetation alongside roads and footpaths, particularly in rural areas where vehicles were sometimes forced to drive in the middle of the road. At the same time, Members noted that not all such hedgerows and trees belonged to the Council and that some residents had expressed concern that vegetation had been cut back too vigorously. Members were informed that the Council was planning additional investment in the management of trees, weeds, and vegetation, as well as additional resources to manage health and safety aspects, particularly around trees. It was also noted that a report on the Council's Trees and Woodland Strategy was scheduled to be presented to the Environment and Green Investment Committee at its meeting on 13 March 2025.
- Drew attention to the benefits of refitting streetlights with LED bulbs, including the subsequent reduction in energy usage and cost, while also noting that the process led to the removal of some lights and the creation of darker areas.

The Executive Director of Place and Sustainability provided a summary of the above discussion, which was endorsed by the Committee.

It was resolved to:

- a) Consider and scrutinise the proposals relevant to this Committee within the Business plan and Budget 2025-26 – 2029-30 put forward by the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee, 17 December 2024;
- b) Recommend changes and/or actions for consideration by the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee at its meeting on 28 January 2025 to enable a business plan and budget to be proposed to Full Council on 11 February 2025; and
- c) Receive the fees and charges schedule for this Committee included at Appendix 2.

256. East West Rail Non-Statutory Consultation

The Committee received an update report on the East West Rail (EWR) scheme, and a draft technical response to the ongoing, third non-statutory consultation, which would be submitted before the deadline on 24 January 2025.

Councillor Mandy Smith, the local Member for the Papworth and Swavesey division, was invited to address the committee. Drawing attention to concerns that had been raised by residents, Councillor Smith suggested that the Council should emphasise to EWR the importance of meaningful and accessible public consultation on the scheme with local communities.

A written statement was read out on behalf of Councillor Maria King, the local Member for the Sawston and Shelford division. Highlighting the importance of the Council and EWR engaging with local residents and providing regular communication throughout the construction and operation of the proposed railway, Councillor King expressed concern about the impacts on local communities along the route and emphasised the role of impact assessments in anticipating and mitigating or avoiding potential issues, suggesting that the Council could provide EWR with information on how the proposals would affect schools and other places of education.

The Chair drew attention to a written statement on the draft response that had been submitted by Councillor Sebastian Kindersley, the local Member for the Gamlingay division, which had been circulated to the committee and published on the meeting website.

While discussing the report and draft response, individual Members:

- Paid tribute to officers for developing such a comprehensive response to the consultation, noting that more details on the proposed railway would be available during the statutory consultation. Members argued that the potential impacts of the railway would extend across the wider region and country, and therefore it was not only of interest to the parts of the county through which the railway would pass.
- Highlighted the importance of extensive and effective consultation of residents and other stakeholders, drawing attention to the fact that levels of attendance were so high at some previous events that not everyone had been able to participate in the discussions. Members also expressed concern about the language and complexity of communications sent by EWR to residents in affected areas and suggested that information should be provided in a clearer way that was easier to understand, particularly when dealing with matters such as compulsory orders. It was also suggested that the Council could propose the development of a code of conduct for EWR, to ensure it abided by its commitments on engagement and communication, both before and during construction.
- Expressed concern about the potential impacts on local communities and residents during the construction stage of the project, and it was suggested that the Council should challenge EWR to consult affected residents and manage, minimise and mitigate such impacts as much as possible, for example by avoiding road closures and constructing temporary bridges where possible. Members also highlighted construction traffic as a concern and argued that EWR should use the railway corridor itself as much as possible for the whole supply chain to reduce the impact on the surrounding road network.
- Drew attention to the benefits of a potential station in the east of Cambridge, as well as further developments in the wider region, and suggested that EWR could provide

greater clarity on the scope of their proposals and what they could enable in the future. Members were informed that an additional station in Cambridge was currently beyond the scope of EWR, although attention was drawn to the draft response from the Council, in which potential future schemes were addressed, and it was noted that the current scope could be expanded as the project developed.

- Suggested the Council should push for full electrification of the railway and sought clarification on whether all sections of the railway would be able to transport the additional weight of freight trains if it was not achieved. Members highlighted the benefits of transporting freight on the EWR railway but also noted concerns from residents about the impact of freight trains running through the night. It was agreed to seek clarification from EWR and provide Members with a briefing note on the various sections' capacity to transport freight. **Action required**
- Expressed concerns about various sections of the proposed route, such as the lack of a station in St Neots and tunnelling plans around Bourn Airfield. It was also argued that decisions on the design should not constrain potential future developments, such as additional stations and further electrification.
- Highlighted the importance of maximising connectivity to the EWR, noting the balance required between having too few and too many stations. Members emphasised the need to ensure bus services connected to the railway, while parking facilities needed to be provided for both active travel and motor vehicles.
- Suggested that improvements to active travel access to Cambridge train station would be beneficial, if accompanied by improvements to bicycle storage in the vicinity, but cautioned about the potential impact on neighbouring residential communities that it could cause through additional traffic and parking.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Endorse the draft response to the East West Rail non-statutory consultation attached at Appendix 1 for submission to East West Rail Company; and
- b) Note that the existing delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, would be used to make any changes to the proposed response following the Committee's discussion and ahead of the non-statutory consultation deadline, as set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report.

257. Performance Monitoring Report - Quarter 2 2024/25

The Committee received an update report on the performance monitoring information and key risks for services within its remit for the 2024/25 Quarter 2 period, covering 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2025. The report also set out the refreshed performance management framework that had been agreed by the Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee on 31 October 2024, and the subsequently the refined set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Strategic Key Performance Indicators (SKPIs).

While discussing the report, individual Members:

- Welcomed the 8% increase in cycling numbers compared to 2013 baseline figures, as shown in Indicator 32a (growth in cycling from a 2013 baseline), but argued that a higher figure should be targeted, although it was acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on cycling trends. It was suggested that the indicator could track fluctuations of mode share across the whole transport network, rather than isolating the growth of cycling numbers compared to over a decade ago.
- Requested further information on the delivery of projects included in the 2023/24 Local Highway Improvement programme, referenced in Indicator 149 (major infrastructure projects being delivered to agreed programmes and budgets). Members were informed there were 72 ongoing projects at the start of the 2024/25 financial year, 64 of which were from the 2023/24 programme. 45 of those projects had been delivered and it was confirmed that all were scheduled for completion by the end of 2025/26 Quarter 2.
- Drew attention to ongoing delays to the processing of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) and queried whether staffing levels were sufficient, particularly given the large number of recent TROs, including some significantly complex schemes. It was acknowledged that the Policy and Regulation team required additional capacity to process TROs and remove the constraint on delivery, and Members were assured that the Council was in the process of identifying resources to fund such recruitment.
- Observed that the vulnerability factor for the health and safety risk that had been rated as red was related to an ongoing prosecution by the Health and Safety Executive relating to incidents that occurred in 2021 and before, and queried how the rating process balanced previous incidents with the likelihood of them happening in the future. Members were informed that following the prosecution the Council wanted to ensure it had clear and well-documented health and safety policies and procedures in place, as well as effective risk assessments and mitigating actions, across its whole operations. The red rating would be reviewed once the assurance work had been completed to ensure this was all in place, although it was agreed that the presentation of ratings would be made clearer in future reports to provide greater context.
- Expressed concern about the high level of road closures for works by external companies, which often caused traffic issues, delayed LHI schemes, disrupted public transport services and frustrated residents and visitors, and it was suggested that the Council could publicise more clearly the level of control it had over such closures. It was suggested that applicants for road closures should be required to identify whether public transport services would be impacted, and Members also highlighted the benefits of encouraging companies to collaborate more widely, both in the coordination of works and the sharing of infrastructure. Members were assured that the Streetworks team continuously sought to minimise the impact and coordinate the timings of such road closures, but it was emphasised that the Council was required to ensure such works could be undertaken. However, it was noted that the level of resources and procedures in place were being reviewed to identify whether the process could be improved in the future, and it was agreed to consider

how street works and road closures could be tracked in future performance monitoring reports. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note performance information outlined in the report; and
- b) Note highlighted risk information outlined in the report.

258. Highways and Transport Committee Agenda Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies

While discussing the committee's agenda plan, it was noted that there were a large number of items scheduled for the meeting on 4 March 2025, and it was suggested that an additional meeting could be scheduled to reduce the size of the agenda. Members were informed that there would not be sufficient time to organise an additional meeting before the pre-election period started in the middle of March 2025, although it was suggested that some of the items could be rescheduled to a later meeting.

The committee noted the agenda plan.

Chair
4 March 2025