

Highways and Transport Committee: Minutes

Date: 26 April 2022

Time: 10:04am to 12.46pm

Present: Councillors Alex Beckett, Piers Coutts, Doug Dew, Lorna Dupre, Jan French Ryan Fuller, Derek Giles, Simon King, Gerri Bird, Brian Milnes, Neil Shailer, Alan Sharp, Graham Wilson and Mandy Smith

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald, Huntingdon, PE28 4YE

75. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillor Mac McGuire, substituted by Anne Hay and Peter McDonald substituted by Graham Wilson.

During the discussion on the Local Highway Improvement 2022-23 Programme and Review Process Cllr Wilson declared a non-disclosable interest as the local Member for Godmanchester and Huntingdon South where Local Highway Improvement Schemes were underway.

76. Minutes – 8 March 2022 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following changes:

Minute 72- Highways Operation Standards. It was discussed that potholes were disproportionately affecting cyclists and was suggested that a separate operational standard applicable to cycle lanes would be explored and possibly implemented.

Minute 68- Highways Maintenance Capital programme- It was agreed that the Active Travel report would be presented as a separate item.

With reference to the Active Travel, it was agreed that future projects would be developed by using the revised hierarchy of road users.

The Action Log was noted with the following amendments and updates:

Report detailing the funding arrangements for civil parking enforcement for each district. The Assistant Director- Transport Strategy and Network Management advised that a briefing note was recently circulated detailing these arrangements and these would be re-circulated. **Action**

A Member sought clarification whether the design of the King's Parade barrier was a sole decision for Cambridge City Council and if so whether a consultation of the design would be carried out for interested parties to contribute. Officers confirmed that the County Council was only involved with the Traffic Regulation Order, however the barrier design would be the responsibility of the City Council with input from the police. The Assistant Director- Transport Strategy and Network Management advised that contact would be made with the City Council and findings would be circulated. **Action**

A Member suggested that the minutes of the Highways Improvement Board were made to be available to the public to aid transparency. The Director Place and Economy confirmed that the suggestion would be explored. **Action**

Further clarification was sought regarding the Confidential Busway Member's Briefing as to whether the whole committee was invited to attend these. The Service Director Highways & Transport confirmed that invitations were sent out to all committee members and future invites would be checked to include all members. **Action**

Action 71 – Members requested a briefing note detailing what improvements could be implemented on the A1303. The Executive Director would provide a follow up. **Action**

Action 70- Members draw attention that the current breakdown of allocation would be provided by Mid-April, and it was yet to be received. Additionally, it was suggested that the review of percentages would be carried out. **Action**

77. Petitions and Public Questions

No petitions or public questions were received.

78. Local Highway Improvement 2022-23 Programme and Review Process

The Committee received a report detailing the current process and the proposals to improve the process of the Local Highways Improvement (LHI) initiative. This included the establishment of a cross party Member Working Group (MWG) which would look at how LHI's were currently delivered and would recommend a new way of working that delivers the objectives of the programme more efficiently. The group would work with public health to incorporate health impacts of schemes into the scoring matrix.

During the discussion, Members:

- Noted that 73 LHI schemes, including those delayed from previous years were scheduled to be carried over into the new financial year and sought clarification on what year these delayed schemes were accumulated from.

- Sought information on when the legacy schemes would be delivered
The Assistant Director- Project Delivery advised that these schemes would be delivered as soon as possible.
- Sought clarification on how many of the schemes were delayed from previous years, whether the older schemes would be prioritised for delivery and whether a review of the delivery programme should be carried out. The Assistant Director - Project Delivery confirmed that new schemes would be prioritised and explained that all older schemes still awaiting delivery were stalled due to a variety of reasons, and not necessarily resources.
- Highlighted that a proportion of the schemes were not delivered due to overengineering and suggested to review the process as well as requested a report detailing the legacy LHI schemes to investigate the barriers of delivery.
The Assistant Director- Project Delivery explained that it was planned that the MWG would review these legacy schemes and use its findings to improve future delivery.
- Requested a breakdown of the reasons for the delays. The Service Director Highways & Transport advised that the biggest challenge was staffing as there was a 60% vacancy rate within the LHI team and road safety team.
- Sought clarification on what measures were taken to reduce the vacancy issues.
The Service Director Highways & Transport advised that due to the sector wide shortage of skilled professionals, the short-term solution was to hire interim staff, however the graduate trainee programme had been launched as a long-term solution. Members suggested that a report would be brought back to the Committee detailing the recruitment efforts. Members further suggested that a report would be presented to them detailing the issues faced by individual schemes from the MWG.
- Sought clarification on the arrangements around the 20mph schemes and whether they were separate from the LHI schemes.
The Assistant Director- Project Delivery advised that the pilots of 20mph schemes were identified within the LHI scheme and were carried out. He confirmed that 20mph schemes would become a separate scheme and would be delivered first, independently from the LHI schemes from a separate funding. Furthermore, the Assistant director advised that delivery of the LHI schemes would be commencing following the setup of the overarching process by the MWG. The Committee noted that an update on 20mph schemes would be presented to the July meeting of the Committee.
- Sought clarification on what caused the delivery delay of the LHI Scheme in Godmanchester. The Assistant Director- Project Delivery advised that some schemes were more difficult to deliver for a variety of reasons that could cause delay.
- Suggested that a website should be set up providing information on the progress of LHI Scheme applications which would enable parish councils to track their applications.

- Suggested support be provided to Parish Councils to enable them to develop a more strategic view to fully utilise the LHI process.
- Suggested that the LHI schemes should incorporate the guidance set out within the revised highway code, including the new road user hierarchy and would prioritise the safety of the road users, including horse riders.
- Suggested an alteration to the timeline of the LHI scheme applications, which would open scheme applications during late autumn to accommodate the setting of precepts within parishes, with evaluation process taking place through winter and schemes approved by March to aid delivery through the summer. A further suggestion was made to implement this this timescale immediately.
The Assistant Director- Project Delivery advised that it would be difficult to alter the already set timescales. The timescales for applications would be reviewed by the MWB.

It was resolved to:

- a) approves the prioritised list of Local Highway Improvements schemes for 2022/23 for each District Council area, provided in Appendix B numbers 1-5 inclusive; and
- b) approves the formation of a cross party Member Working Group to review the current processes and bring any proposed changes to this committee for approval in Autumn 2022.

79. March Future High Street Fund and St Neots Future High Street Fund Projects

The Committee received a report that sought approval for the March Future High Street Fund Project (MFHP) and St Neots Future High Street Fund Project (SNFHP) to progress to design and construction aligned with the funding constraints. The presenting officer advised that the reason for these two schemes to be presented together was due to their similarity. The presenting officer highlighted that Fenland District Council (FDC) and Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) were the sponsors and budget holders for these projects and the County Council would act as a delivery agent on the three highways related elements. The Interim Project Manager advised that the aim of these projects was to improve the town centres of both towns and to boost footfall for businesses as well as enable to community to come together to enjoy public events. The funding for some of the elements of the SNFHP and the MFHP funding was only available until March 2024.

During the discussion, Members:

- Sought clarification on the impacts of not completing a high proportion of work by the set deadlines.
The Interim Project Manager advised that if a high proportion of the work would not be achieved it would be a possibility of losing some of the funding secured.

However, he highlighted a possibility of a mechanism that timescales could be extended.

- Sought clarification on what would qualify as a high proportion of work and what constraints were present to achieve that and how would these be addressed.
The Assistant Director- Project Delivery advised that £4m should be spent by March 2024 which included the Combined Authority Funding and the Future High Street Funding, and the National Highways Contribution could potentially be spent by 2025.
The delivery would rely on a mixture of permanent and interim staff and the cost forecast was based on this setup, however if permanent staff were to be secured during this period, it could result in cost savings.
- One Member advised the Committee that the residents of March and March Town Council were not consulted on the plans set out for March Future High Street.
The Assistant Director- Project Delivery informed the Committee, that Fenland Officers advised that there would be further engagement and that the primary aim of this report was to seek approval of the overarching project.
- Noted that the absence of the consultation would pose and added risk to the programme delivery as it could bring unexpected design changes.
- Suggested that the cost estimations within a report would be presented in the same way to enable Members to compare these easily.
The Assistant Director- Project Delivery advised that the projects were on different maturity level therefore costings details would be different and more detailed for a more mature project, and this resulted in the divergence in presentation.
- Expressed concern that the plans would not allow for enough disabled parking. The Interim Project Manager advised that the number of disabled parking spaces were likely to be increased and the exact numbers would be available at a later design stage.
- Sought clarification on the reasons for not including Brook Street as part of the plans as well as on the reasons for not involving the local Parish Councillor in the consultation.
The Assistant Director- Project Delivery advised that including Brook Street in the design could be explored as well as he would investigate why the Councillor was not consulted.
- Sought clarification on how much funding was already spent from the allocation.
The Interim Project Manager advised that between £250k- £300k had been spent in total which included the investigations and design costs.
- Commented, that gaining the views of local people and businesses should be made a priority before project delivery.
- A Member called for the County Council to contribute funds towards the programme delivery just like the Government, the Combined Authority, Huntingdonshire District Council and National Highways did.

- Sought clarification on how the available funds set out in recommendation “f” would be spent.

The Assistant Director- Project Delivery advised that the control over these funds were with HDC and the funds would be used to deliver the SNFHP as set out in the report.

It was resolved to:

- a) note progress to date regarding the March Future High Street Fund project;
- b) agree that the Council accept £5,095,757 of funding from Fenland District Council to deliver the March Future High Street Fund project;
- c) delegate a Decision to enter into a Delivery and Funding Agreement with Fenland District Council to the Director of Highways and Transport;
- d) delegates a Decision to Award and enter into a construction contract for the construction works from an existing framework or open procurement process to the Director of Highways and Transport to enable the construction of the March Future High Street Fund Project to commence from early 2023 and the Market Square element from Summer 2022;
- e) note progress to date regarding the St Neots Future High Street Fund project;
- f) agree that the Council accept £7,870,685 of funding from Huntingdonshire District Council to deliver the St Neots Future High Street Fund project
- g) delegate a Decision to enter into a Delivery and Funding Agreement with Huntingdonshire District Council to the Director of Highways and Transport; and
- h) delegates a Decision to Award and enter into a construction contract for the construction works from an existing framework or open procurement process to the Director of Highways and Transport to enable the construction of the St Neots Future High Street Fund Project to commence from early 2023.

80. March Area Transport Study Broad Street Element

The Committee received a report that provided a progress update for the March Area Transport Study Broad Street element and sought the approval to progress to design and construction aligned with the March Future High Street project timeline constraints. The officer highlighted that there were five elements of the March Project Package, including the Future High Street Project and the Broad Street element and advised that these two areas were interlinked, and one could not be delivered without the other. The simultaneous delivery of both projects would also bring opportunities and advantages for the project, such as cost savings.

Members welcomed the project but highlighted that they have expressed concerns regarding the time constraint and cost efficiency of the project.

It was resolved to:

- a) notes progress to date;
- b) the Council agrees to accept £3,780,387 of funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to allow construction of the Broad Street element which is integral with delivery of the March Future High Street public realm project;
- c) delegates a Decision to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to the Director of Highways and Transport; and
- d) delegates a Decision to Award and enter into a construction contract for the construction works from an existing framework or open procurement process to the Director of Highways and Transport to enable the construction of the Broad Street element to commence from early 2023.

81. St Ives Local Improvements

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the progress of the St Ives Local Improvement Scheme and sought approval to deliver the packages of improvement measures which were identified in the St Ives Transport Study. The officer highlighted that it was proposed that a Member Working Group involving district councils were established to run in parallel to scheme development, consultation, and scheme implementation.

During the discussion, Members:

- Sought clarification whether a new working group would be formed or the member steering group would be re-established.
The Interim Project Manager advised that this decision would be made by the Committee.
- Highlighted the importance of consultation with residents.

It was resolved to:

- a) notes the update report and progress made in the delivery of proposals from the St Ives Transport study which was last reported to Committee 15th September 2020;
- b) approves the list of measures identified in the St Ives Transport Study set out in paragraphs 2.2 to 2.9 subject to the Combined Authority grant funding being secured for design, consultation and delivery;
- c) the Council agrees to accept in total £2.3M of funding (£1M in 2022/23 and £1.3M in 2023/24) from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined

Authority to allow design, programming and delivery of the St Ives Local Improvement schemes;

- d) delegate the decision to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to the Director of Highways and Transport;
- e) grants approval to procure construction works from framework or full procurement process delegating the decision to Award and enter into Contract for construction to the Director of Highways and Transport and
- f) establish a Member Working Group involving District Councils to run in parallel to scheme development, consultation and scheme implementation.

82. Highways and Transport Committee Agenda Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups and Panels

The Deputy Democratic Services Manager advised that the Ross Street TRO Item was removed from the Agenda Plan.

During discussion Members:

- Suggested that the following items to be added to the Agenda Plan:
 - o Report from the LHI Working Group
 - o Process and position on the recovery of costs in the cases where the County Council cuts back vegetation
 - o Enhanced Pothole Repair Service
 - o Wisbech Access Study
 - o Non-motorised user design guide
 - o King's Parade
 - o Guided Busway
 - o Percentage allocation of funding across the county spend versus need for highways maintenance
 - o Minutes of the highway improvement Board
- Suggested that the Action Plan and Agenda Plan would be combined and form a complete document.
- Commented that the agenda for the July meeting was quite lengthy and requested to have a longer time allocated for the meeting.
- Suggested the use of the September reserve date and it to be brought forward to allow sufficient time for decision-making.

The Committee noted it's Agenda Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups and Panels.

Chair
April 2022