

Highways and Transport Committee: Minutes

Date: 4 October 2022

Time: 10:00am to 12.32pm

Present: Councillors Alex Beckett (Chair), Neil Shailer (Vice-Chair), Gerri Bird, Piers Coutts, Douglas Dew, Lorna Dupre, Ryan Fuller, Simon King, Peter McDonald, Mac McGuire, Brian Milnes, Tom Sanderson, and Alan Sharp.

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

108. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillor Derek Giles (Councillor Tom Sanderson sub) and Councillor Mandy Smith.

109. Minutes – 13 September 2022 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

The action log was noted together with the following updates:

Minute 98 – It was noted that the LED replacement programme undertaken as part of the street lighting PFI had been completed. However, not all streetlights were replaced through the programme and there was a proposal contained within the Business Plan for a further replacement programme.

110. Petitions and Public Questions

No petitions were received. There were several public questions that were taken under the relevant agenda item. The questions and responses are contained at Appendix A to these minutes.

111. Traffic Management Act Part 6 – Application to the Department of Transport

The Committee received a report that sought authorisation to apply to the Department of Transport to be included in the list of Authorities that can enforce moving traffic offences under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, pending the outcome of a public consultation on 2 November 2022. Members noted that the deadline for submissions to the Department for Transport had been moved to January 2023 and it was anticipated that the statutory instruments would go live in summer 2023.

The Committee received comments and questions from CamCycle attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Confirmed that Blue Badge holders would not be exempt from the restrictions as the badge was only intended to help the person park.
- Welcomed proposal the proposal, however, expressed disappointment that it was a further area of Police work that the Council was having to undertake.
- Questioned how the powers would be enforced in areas that did not contract civil parking enforcement to the Council. Officers explained that enforcement would be undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council and the contracts would be held separately and would not necessarily be the same enforcement agency.

It was resolved to:

- a) Authorise Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) to make an application to the Department of Transport for powers under the Traffic Management Act Part 6 to improve safety and tackle congestion by enforcing moving traffic offences.
- b) Delegate the authority to the Director of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, to determine any objections to the public consultation and apply to the Department of Transport for powers under the Traffic Management Act Part 6.

112. Local Highway Improvement Member Working Group Report

The Working Group had reviewed the existing LHI process which had been found to be overprescribed and complex. The report presented the recommendations of the Working Group that reviewed the process from beginning to end. The presenting officer highlighted the key changes recommended by the Working Group.

The Committee received comments and questions from CamCycle attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Thanked Members and officers that had taken part in the Working Group. Commenting further, the importance of the LHI programme to local communities and its 'bottom up' approach was highlighted.
- Welcomed the proposed changes to the process as it had become unwieldy and had resulted in applications not being made.
- Noted that approximately 65% of schemes were currently categorised as non-complex. The budget for the first year was split evenly and was designed to be flexible to respond to the applications received.

- Recommended that the success of the proposals was reviewed in the future and highlighted the desire for equity amongst Parish Councils that sought the ability to make the same number of applications as Town Councils.
- Drew attention to the difficulties gathering data regarding active travel, particularly accident recording, and therefore the acceptance of anecdotal evidence was necessary.

It was resolved to:

- a) Review the list of recommendations made by the cross-party member working group.
- b) Approve the list of recommendations in time for implementation prior to the 23/24 round of LHI applications.
- c) Approve the re-formation of the member working group to review the first round of non-complex scheme scores once the prioritisation by officers has been completed and review the revised LHI process as and when needed once the next round of applications has been approved by committee.

113. Delivery Robots Trial – Update and Expansion

The Committee received a report on the Cambourne trial of Starship Technology's food delivery robots. Following customer surveys receiving 97.2% positive feedback, proposed areas for trial expansion included Cherry Hinton, Romsey, and Queen Ediths, Longstanton and Northstowe.

Local Member for Cambourne, Councillor Mark Howell, spoke in support of the trial. Councillor Howell began by drawing the Committee's attention to the widespread local support of the trial and the positive reaction of residents to the robots. Commenting further, he expressed regret that they were not available during the COVID-19 pandemic as they would have provided a valuable service to residents during lockdown or during periods of self-isolation. The positive benefits for people with disabilities were emphasised by Councillor Howell, together with the reduction in car journeys and the positive impact that had on the environment. The robots had not replaced every shopping trip and were designed for small items.

The Committee received comments and questions from CamCycle attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Highlighted the support of the local community for the trial, however, noted the challenges posed in areas of Cambridge where narrow pavements and obstructions may hinder or prevent their roll out.
- Drew attention to Northstowe as a new development that could potentially use the Cambourne model with little modification and therefore encouraged its prioritisation.
- Expressed reservations relating to the legislative framework the robots would operate under. The Department for Transport had not yet given approval and if the robots were deemed to be mechanically propelled vehicles, then they would not be able to travel along the footpath. Officers explained that the Department for Transport was interested in the results of the trial and legislation would be forthcoming. There was a degree of risk for which the Council would be liable for in the event of an accident, however, there had been significant technical analysis of the risk.
- Sought assurance that people with disabilities who used mobility scooters and wheelchairs would not be adversely affected by the robots, questioning how the robot would avoid them and whether they would be tactile to allow people with visual disabilities to access them. Officers explained that the robots were designed to be passive and stop to allow a person to pass. There was also a facility whereby if the robot was stationary for a period of time, control would revert to a remote operator who would be able to manoeuvre the robot. Members noted that the ordering and opening of the robot could be done via a mobile phone.
- Expressed concern that consultation with the British Horse Society had not taken place. Officers informed the Committee that Starship was meeting with the British Horse Society and socialisation trails with horses were planned.

It was resolved to:

Approve the continuation and expansion of the trial of food delivery robots as presented within the report.

114. HGV Policy

An HGV Member Working Group was formed in December 2020 to reduce concerns regarding the impact of HGV movements in Cambridgeshire. The HGV Policy had been developed as a result to mitigate concerns.

The Committee received comments and questions from CamCycle attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Noted the comments of the Chair of the member HGV Working Group. The revised policy provided a much fuller and comprehensive framework and was a much more useful document. The policy now linked with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Combined Authority's (CPCA) Local Transport Connectivity Plan (LTCP) which did not exist when the original policy was developed. Productive meetings had taken place with the CPCA that discussed issues that could be incorporated into the LTCP such as the provision of safe, clean overnight stopping areas for HGVs. The policy was intended to be of practical use and intended to enable local communities to come forward with their views and shape their area. It was acknowledged that funding was not attached to the policy, however, the policy was more positive about what communities could achieve.

- Welcomed the review of the policy and the report together with drawing attention to the work of Councillor Steve Criswell on this area. Caution was urged as the enforcement agency was the Police and they had been a barrier to enforcement in the past. An example was provided of the weight restriction through Sawtry where residents would regularly complain about HGVs parking, contrary to policy, at a nearby industrial estate. The Police would not undertake enforcement action because, in their view, it was a safe area for them to park and provided access to local facilities.
- Highlighted the role Trading Standards took in enforcement through the operation of weighbridges. It was also essential that in terms of route mapping that the Council worked closely with neighbouring Highway Authorities as much of the traffic was passing through Cambridgeshire.
- Drew attention to funding as an issue as it would be expensive for Parish Councils. Overnight stopping was highlighted as an issue together with the waste generated that was often dumped in hedgerows. Overnight stops and adequate facilities were therefore of the utmost importance. Attention was also drawn to the impact of roadworks along the A14 that had resulted in significant issues in Newmarket.
- Attention was drawn to the role of Traffic Commissioners and their impact on HGV operators which was significant.
- Expressed disappointment that the policy would not necessarily make the process of implementing temporary weight restrictions simpler as the process was set out in law. The closure of Guyhirn roundabout was cited as an example where National Highways made funding available for diversions, however, the Police resisted, and it was suggested the Council should take more of an active role in the future.
- Emphasised the importance of communication with Parish Councils to encourage Parishes to take control.
- Suggested a report return to the Committee at a future date that would provide a review and include temporary weight restrictions.
- Suggested a contacts section be added to the policy that contained the various relevant agencies.

It was resolved to:

- a) Approve the new HGV Policy to replace the existing Heavy Commercial Vehicle (HCV) (Access Restrictions) policy within the Highways Operational Standards (HOS) document. This content will be removed from the HOS.
- b) Agree that the Director of Highways and Transport, in consultation with the Chair / Vice Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, may approve minor amendments to the HGV Policy.

115. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The Committee received a report that detailed the Local Cycling and Walking Plan (LCWIP) for Cambridgeshire in line with government guidance. This aimed at reducing carbon emissions and promoting active travel. Public consultation had occurred 1st June – 27th July 2021, and adoption of the Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Transport Strategies were planned for 2023.

The Committee received comments and questions from CamCycle and Mr Bill Blake, attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

During discussion of the report:

- A Member sought greater clarity regarding the responses to the consultation and the location of respondents, questioning whether there was more granular data available on the location of respondents and their responses. It was also questioned whether the consultation responses showed a potential apathy towards proposed routes in Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, and Fenland. The presenting officer confirmed that the heat map within the report showed the general location of respondents and the data informing that could be interrogated.
- Attention was drawn by a Member to Wyton on the Hill and RAF Wyton that were isolated; commenting that the LCWIP was a missed opportunity to link the communities with St Ives and Huntingdon. Wyton was as large, if not larger than, Alconbury and Hemingford and the RAF base was a significant local employer. It was disappointing that the residents would remain reliant on the car and encouraged it to be looked at again.
- A Member queried why several cycle routes that developed through the A14 legacy no longer appeared within the LCWIP. **ACTION**
- The challenge of maintaining and improving existing cycle routes was highlighted by a Member citing the A1123 from St Ives to Huntingdon.
- Attention was drawn by a Member to the challenges faced by rural areas that impacted on their to comply with the requirements of LTN/120, however, commented that it was essential that every effort was made to ensure compliance.

It was resolved to:

- a) Adopt the Cambridgeshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan;
- b) Delegate future review and updating of the plan to the Director of Highways and Transport in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the committee.

116. Business Planning Proposals for 2023-28: opening update and overview

The Committee received a report that set out the Council's current business and budgetary planning position and estimates for 2023-2028; the principal risks, contingencies and implications facing the Committee and the Council's resources; and the process and next steps for the Council in agreeing a business plan and budget for future years. The Executive Director: Place and Sustainability, highlighted the overall budget gap the Council faced that stood at circa £28m that was very significant and accounted for inflationary pressures. There were several savings options contained within paper, including proposals on streetlighting and recycling facilities.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Attention was drawn to the potential for restricted gas and electricity supplies resulting in power cuts during the winter months. Officers provided assurance that work was ongoing on preparing the Council for such an eventuality. Members noted that 50% of all energy usage by the Council was on street-lighting.
- Expressed concern regarding increased energy costs and urged careful consideration of the impact on residents and safety of any plans to dim or turn off streetlights to conserve energy and/or save money.
- Drew attention to underspends that had occurred in recent financial years and questioned whether measures had been adopted to mitigate such possibilities. Officers confirmed that they were assessing all options, while savings were being sought to achieve, it was essential that the Council continued to deliver.
- Emphasised the importance of accurate forecasting to ensure that cutbacks to services later prove to be unnecessary.
- Expressed concern over staffing issues, the challenges the Council faced in recruiting staff and the reliance on agency and interim staff. It was requested that officers undertook a benchmarking exercise with comparable Highway Authorities to understand the Council's relative performance and learn how other local authorities were approaching the issue. Officers commented that the issues faced by the Council were similar to those faced across the sector, including contractors. There had been considerable work undertaken to promote Cambridgeshire as an attractive place to live and work together with an apprenticeship programme. **ACTION**

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2023 – 2028 business plan;

- b) Note the initial estimates made for demand, inflationary and other pressures; and
- c) Note overview and estimates made for the updated capital programme.

117. Finance Monitoring Report – August 2022

The Committee received a report that set out the Committee's financial position for August 2022. It detailed forecast pressures and underspends across the different services. Members noted the projected revenue overspend of £526k of which £236K had been driven by additional street lighting costs resulting from inflationary pressure and increased cost of energy. A £148k pressure had also arisen from the maintenance of the temporary fence on the southern section of the guided busway.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Requested that an update on the progress of Local Highway Initiative (LHI) schemes be included within the report. Officers explained that the information was contained within the monthly service report that was circulated to all Members and it was intended that progress with LHI schemes would also be publicly available via the Council's website.
- Highlighted the number of vacancies within the directorate and requested an update on recruitment and how the figures were presented within the report. Members noted that a report was scheduled that would update the Committee on the recruitment position. A discussion would take place at Spokes to review how the data was presented within the report. **ACTION**
- Drew attention to the capital budget element of the report and the apparent omission of the A313 Swaffham Heath Crossroads. Officers undertook to provide an update outside of the meeting.

It was resolved to:

Review, note and comment upon the report.

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

The Committee noted the Agenda Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups.

A Member requested a future report on recruitment that investigated and benchmarked the Council against other similar local authorities and developing a Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan for all non-motorised users. The Chair reminded Members that agenda item should be suggested through their group Spokes

It was confirmed that a report regarding Civil Parking Enforcement would be presented to the December meeting of the Committee.

Questioned when, following a motion at Full Council relating to 40mph buffer zones, would a report be brought before the Committee. Officers informed Members a specific report would be presented in early 2023.

Clarity was sought regarding the Royston to Granta Park Working Group and whether it would be reconvened. Officers explained that the Council was awaiting funding to be released by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Working Group would be reconvened.

It was resolved to:

Note the Agenda Plan.

Chair
July 2022