

## HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 1 December 2020

Time: 10.00am to 11.50am

Present: Councillors I Bates (Chairman), H Batchelor, J French (substituting for Cllr Fuller), L Harford, M Howell (Vice-Chairman), N Kavanagh, S King, I Manning, M Smith (substituting for Cllr Connor) and A Taylor

### 50. Apologies for absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were presented on behalf of Councillors Fuller and Connor (Cllrs French and Smith substituting respectively).

There were no declarations of interest.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Rob Sanderson, Democratic Services Officer, for his work supporting the Committee and wished him well in his retirement.

### 51. Minutes – 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020

The minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were agreed, with the following correction:

Councillor French was not present at the meeting.

### 52. Highways and Transport Committee Action Log

The Committee noted the Action Log

The following points were raised:

Item 45 – Skanska Enhanced Pothole Repair Service – it was confirmed that the meeting had taken place on 26/11/20, and officers were putting together a briefing note. The date of the next meeting would be advised. **ACTION REQUIRED**

Item 146b - Finance Monitoring Report – noting that there was a report on the LHI Working Group later in the meeting, a Member asked when the report on the LHI bid process would be reported to Committee. It was confirmed that this would be presented to Committee in 2021.

### 53. Petitions and Public Questions

There was one public question which was considered under item 54.

## 54. Chisholm Trail and Abbey Chesterton Bridge Project Status Update

Members considered an update on the programme and cost for the Chisholm Trail project, including Abbey Chesterton Bridge. The report also sought agreement to request additional project funding from the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

The Chisholm Trail was a strategic, predominantly off-road, walking and cycle link between Cambridge and Cambridge North railway stations, which roughly followed the rail route. Officers briefly outlined the history of this flagship investment, and outlined the funding and contract arrangements that had been agreed in 2017. The contract was initially awarded to a joint venture between Carillion and Tarmac Construction. Tarmac Construction continued with the contract following the collapse of Carillion early in 2018. The Abbey Chesterton Bridge and Trail were scheduled for completion in 2021.

Whilst risk allowances had been made in the original plans, these risks had been underestimated, and had been exacerbated by both the collapse of Carillion and the Covid-19 pandemic. An additional budget of £2.063M was required for Phase 1 (Abbey Chesterton Bridge). The intention was to secure this funding through the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

There was one Public Question from Ms De Beaux of Camcycle. The detail of the question and the response are attached at appendix 1 to these minutes. Presentation of the question and response can be found at the Youtube recording: [Highways and Transport Committee - YouTube](#)

The Chairman thanked Ms De Beaux for her question.

Arising from the public question, a Member asked where the information relating to the A14 overspend, referred to by Ms De Beaux, had come from. Ms De Beaux was unsure but advised that this information was in the public domain. The Chairman pointed out that the A14 scheme was a Highways England project, and was not the responsibility of the County Council.

Arising from the report:

- ✓ A Member acknowledged that this was a very complex project, involving a large number of landowners and negotiations, but ultimately the important thing was the resulting scheme. However, he was concerned about the significant overspend, and asked at what point the majority group had become aware of the overspend. He also sought reassurance that Phase 2 of the Chisholm Trail was not in doubt. Officers advised that in terms of timelines, they had become aware of the overspend in the summer, and alerted Members in the early autumn, who had challenged officers to come back with a proposed way forward, which was now presented in the report;
- ✓ A Member asked about the likelihood of the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) agreeing to the significant additional funding. The Chairman reassured the Committee that Members and officers had been working closely with the

GCP to deliver this project, and he was absolutely confident in the GCP's commitment to the project. Officers supported these comments;

- ✓ Another Member stressed the importance of the GCP providing funds so the Chisholm Trail project could continue and be completed on schedule. He reminded the Committee that when the consultation was originally undertaken, there had been one of the largest positive responses from local people ever received in relation to such a consultation, indicating the strong need and desire for the Chisholm Trail in Cambridge;
- ✓ Noting that the award of the contract had been under New Engineering Contract 3, a Member asked if the possibility of compensation was being explored, i.e. whether contractors would be making a contribution to the overspend. The Member also looked forward to the commencement of Phase 2, including the reconfiguration of the junction at Coldhams Lane and Cromwell Road, which was a hugely important safety component of the Trail;
- ✓ A Member asked what processes were in place within the County Council to understand why projects go over budget, and how that learning could be embedded when future projects were being commissioned. He suggested that a report covering those learning points could be considered at a future Committee meeting. Officers commented that some of the decisions taken in 2017 had led to the current position. The clear difficulties faced with this project had prompted the Executive Director to undertake a review of project management, which had taken place over the autumn. This had highlighted a number of areas where there was scope for improvement, and different ways of working could be embedded. The Executive Director offered to provide a briefing note on the management improvements and changes that were taking place, and it was agreed that this should be circulated to all Members. **ACTION REQUIRED.**

With regard to a query about the cost consultants' input, officers advised that this would be vital, especially in terms of potential to claim back on the NEC contract, scrutinising all the costs submitted by contractors to ensure they were entirely appropriate.

In terms of the underpass, officers advised that whilst the County Council was not directly responsible for that part of the scheme, it was seen as a key part of scheme by all partners.

A Member commented that these type of problems with managing major projects appeared to be endemic nationally, and suggested that it may be worth looking at best practice further afield, so that the best project management techniques could be replicated. Officers agreed, and added that they were keen to redouble efforts and learn wherever possible.

A Member commented that the A14 project had allegedly been completed within both the schedule and budget, but residents in her Bar Hill Division would not agree that it had been finished on time, and she was alarmed to hear that it may be over budget.

Whilst acknowledging that major projects were often difficult to accurately cost, a Member alluded to Ms De Beaux's point about systemic issues, and asked officers

when they envisaged the changes they were making taking effect. Officers commented that learning from these issues would be implemented on new and existing projects with immediate effect, but acknowledged that this would take time to feed through in terms of improved outcomes. One of the key lessons learned in this process had been more rigorous definition and costing of projects from the outset.

Noting the acknowledgement in the report and at the meeting that project management shortcomings during the early stages of the project had contributed to the current situation, a Member commented that he remained anxious for future stages of the project, especially given the proximity of the underpass to the Leper Chapel. The Member also stressed the value of external consultants for project management from early stages. Another Member agreed with this point, saying that the use of external consultants on such projects was very much an “invest to save” approach.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) note the project update;
- b) seek additional Section 106 funding of £2.063m for the Abbey Chesterton Bridge through the Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board.

## 55. Local Highway Improvement (LHI) Proposed Member Working Group

The Committee received a report regarding the establishment of a member working group to review the Local Highway Improvement (LHI) scheme, with any changes to be implemented for schemes to be delivered in the 2022/23 financial year.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Appoint Councillors L Every, I Gardener, L Harford, L Jones, S King and I Manning, to the working group;
- b) Approve the timescale for the review outlined in paragraph 2.8 of the report.

## 56. Review of Cambridgeshire Heavy Goods Vehicle Policy

The Committee considered a report on the proposed review of the Cambridgeshire Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Policy, which also sought Member nominations to the HGV Working Group.

The existing HGV Policy had been produced in 2011, and both the Policy and Advisory Freight Map were now of limited use, given the widespread use of Satnavs. It was therefore recommended that a new policy be developed, acknowledging HGVs have a vital role to play, but that not all parts of the highway network were necessarily suitable for HGV use.

The Vice-Chairman suggested that with both this and the LHI Working Group, if a Member was unable to attend a Working Group meeting, a substitute could attend in their place, and the Committee agreed that this was a good idea.

A Member commented that this was a timely and important review. He advised that in his area, there were many tractors which were not the traditional agricultural type, but huge, fast track vehicles, effectively operating as HGVs, but without the relevant legal framework. There was also a big problem in his Division with mud on the roads, and anecdotally this was caused by one large local company. He asked if the Working Party could examine the use of fast track tractors, and mud not cleared off the road. It was noted that stakeholder groups such as the National Farmers Union (NFU) would be engaged in the development of the new policy.

Whilst thanking the Vice-Chairman for his suggestion of flexibility on substitutes, a Member commented that the Working Group size was essentially a political decision, as it was predicated on the number that most favoured the majority party. He also commented that there had been a HGV Working Group for some time, and that Councillor Dupré had been specifically excluded from that Group. Responding, the Chairman advised that the HGV Diamond Group was focussed on very specific work, for a small part of the county, whereas this was a new cross-party, countywide group.

A Member queried the timeline for the development of the HGV Policy. It was noted that engagement with stakeholders would be particularly important for the development of this policy, which was why this would take longer than the LHI Group, as the latter group was more bespoke in its Terms of Reference. It was noted that paragraph 2.8 of the report stated that the review and drafting of a new policy would take around twelve months to complete.

It was agreed that Highways England would be included as a stakeholder.

It was resolved unanimously to:

1. Appoint Councillors S Criswell, D Connor, L Dupré, W Hunt, N Kavanagh and M Smith to the Member working group to review and update the HGV Policy;
2. Agree all parties may substitute Members if any Member was unable to attend a meeting of the Working Group.

## 57. Highway Services Contract Key Performance Indicators – quarterly report

The Committee received a report which provided Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Highways Services Contract. These KPIs helped officers and Members monitor and manage the performance of the Skanska contract throughout the year. There was also a reconciliation carried out to provide annualised KPIs, which could result in changes to the contract.

Members noted the four Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) which set out the contractor's proposed actions and steps to meet KPIs, which related to:

- ✓ Timeliness of CAT2 defect repairs;
- ✓ Non compliance with Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) as a proportion of all Street Works permits;
- ✓ Final Accounts being completed within three months of the works completion;

- ✓ Target costs versus actual costs for projects.

The Chairman advised that following presentation at the Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee in December 2019, Councillors Harford, King, Scutt and Manning had met with officers to gain a deeper understanding of managing the performance of the Highways Contract, and he thanked those Members for their contributions to this work.

Arising from the report, Members:

- ✓ Asked for more detail on the KPIs that reflect underperformance, specifically programme delivery including non compliance that had resulted in FPNs. Officers advised that the Council monitored its own activity on the network as well as utility companies, and FPNs reflected non compliance in relation to the permitting system undertaken through Street Manager;
- ✓ Commented that a culture needed to be promoted whereby target dates were set for all projects. Officers confirmed that there was currently a piece of work on target dates within the Contract taking place, and there was also an Annual Plan of Works which included target dates, and officers were actively looking to improve these with the Contractor;
- ✓ A Member was pleased to note that Recycled Construction Waste was 97%, especially as this would probably have additional benefits such as a reduction in HGV movements. Officers confirmed that time was being devoted to a further breakdown to identify where recycling and reuse was taking place, working with Climate Change colleagues and Skanska to better understand the carbon footprint across the Contract, and capture efficiency savings on particular projects;
- ✓ Noted that in terms of percentage in the task order programme, the datum captured reflected the time from when the order was placed with Skanska, to when it was completed, so the KPI essentially represented the duration of the works;
- ✓ With regard to FPNs, noted the target was 5%, but the latest figure was 42%. Officers agreed that this was a particular area for improvement, and advised that a Performance Improvement Working Group had been established. It was noted that performance against this target had varied, with performance meeting the <5% target at times;
- ✓ A Member expressed concern that a wide range of activities were being included under one KPI, specifically cyclical maintenance e.g. maintaining gullies and grass cutting, as these issues were often very important to residents, and probably warranted closer scrutiny. Officers confirmed that they did break these figures down, so the granularity of these figures was available for issues such as gully cleaning, as well as other contract components. The Chairman asked if officers could provide the breakdown on the points raised (gullies and grass cutting) to all Members. Action required.

Officers advised that there had been discussions at a senior level with Skanska about improving performance, especially around Value For Money and timeliness of the delivery of schemes. Graham Hughes and Richard Lumley had been meeting weekly with senior Skanska colleagues to review detailed performance issues. In addition, there were monthly joint management team meetings between Richard's team and Skanska, looking at the day to day running of the contract, enabling much more timely challenge and clarity on the Council's expectations. Information was also being fed back into the quarterly Board meetings that the Chairman and Vice Chairman attended.

The Chairman commented that he was looking to see Skanska improve their performance of this significant contract, especially as this was a very forward facing customer service, and residents were very aware of issues such as potholes, road repairs, and gully maintenance. He reassured the Committee that along with senior officers, there was very close oversight of the Skanska contract by both the Chairman and Vice Chairman. A Member asked why all political parties could not be involved in those meetings, and the Chairman agreed to discuss this issue with Steve Cox.

The Chairman suggested arranging occasional meetings with those Members who had already indicated an interest on an informal basis. **Action required.**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note and approve the report.

## 58. Highways and Transport Committee Review of Draft Revenue and Capital Business Planning Proposals for 2021 - 2026

Members considered a late report on the draft revenue and capital Business Planning proposals for 2021-2026. The Chairman had previously exercised his discretion to accept this late report on the following grounds:

Reasons for lateness: The delay has been the result of needing to collate and analyse the most up to date financial, local and national data sets in order to enable the Committee to have the best possible discussion on the current position and future opportunities.

Reasons for urgency: To enable the Committee's views to be available to the General Purposes Committee when it reviews the budget proposals on 22 December 2020.

The opening section of the report was prepared centrally and was included in the business planning reports presented to each Service Committee. The second section focused on the Committee's specific business area, including the specific business planning proposals. There were two proposals, one relating to the replacement of the mobile vehicle activated signs (MVAS), and the other was an additional domain for the Winter Maintenance Services.

At their October meeting, the Committee had considered an additional proposal around digitising drainage data. Officers had explored this proposal further, but concluded that it could be absorbed in normal service activity, without additional resource.

Arising from the report:

- ✓ A Member commented on the MVAS: whilst supporting the proposal, he felt there was a broader lesson regarding the maintenance requirements, as MVAS had cost more than originally anticipated. On a similar issue, another Member raised the issue of maintenance of cycle routes, and suggested that this should be factored in to scheme costs when projects were initially planned. Officers advised that additional resource was being allocated to cycle route maintenance, but as the majority of new infrastructure was now being commissioned by CPCA and GCP, the Council would also be requiring partners to put in place a contribution to ongoing maintenance for infrastructure projects. A report on this would be considered at the Committee in the new year;
- ✓ A Member raised an issue on Winter gritting – again whilst supporting the proposal, there was no reference to involving Parishes, and some Parishes were often keen to help the Council with winter gritting, at minimal cost. Officers confirmed that the Council worked closely with a number of Parishes and farmers, but that this point related specifically to forecasting more accurately through meteorological data;
- ✓ A Member asked if solar powered MVAS could be considered rather than signs that required batteries. Whilst these would be more costly at the outset, during their lifetime they would probably prove to be more cost effective. Officers commented that technology in this area was constantly evolving, and that the key concern was what individual communities wanted, and whether they were static or mobile. Whilst solar powered signs had not proven viable to date, this was kept under review;
- ✓ A Member asked if consideration had been given to using machine learning and predictive analysis to help plan winter gritting and gully maintenance. Officers confirmed that this had been discussed in the past, but had not yet been embraced. The drainage proposal would use an existing system for planning maintenance tasks;
- ✓ A Member asked if there was an overall sense of where financial information was captured, with regard to overspends and underspends. Officers agreed that this needed to be reviewed, especially with regard to underspends being most productively allocated;
- ✓ A Member highlighted that March Town Council had provided the majority of funding for a MVAS project in 2019, but many of the LED lights had failed and the batteries were not lasting very long.

It was noted that the Liberal Democrat Group would be abstaining from the vote on this item.

It was resolved by a majority to:



- a) Note the progress made to date and next steps required to develop the business plan for 2021-2026;
- b) Note the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's financial planning;
- c) Endorse the budget and savings proposals that are within the remit of the Committee as part of the consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan;
- d) Endorse the changes to the capital programme that are within the remit of the Committee as part of consideration of the Council's overall Business Plan;
- e) Note the updates to fees and charges for 2021-22.

## 59. Finance Monitoring Report – October 2020

The Committee considered a report on the financial position as at the end of October 2020. It was noted that there had been a problem with the publication of the appendix, but this had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting.

It was noted that there were virtually no changes since the previous report had been considered by Committee. The revenue overspend remained at £3.3M, and this was mainly due to loss of income due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This was being recouped via a grant, but that grant sat centrally within the accounts, so was not reflected in the bottom line.

On the Capital side, officers advised that since the agenda had been published, the General Purposes Committee had taken place, and the £4.2M pothole grant to Committee had been agreed at that meeting.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- (a) review, note and comment upon the report.

## 60. Highways and Transport Committee Agenda Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Advisory Groups

It was resolved to note the Agenda Plan.

Chairman

**Question from Ms De Beaux, Camcycle:**

The Chisholm Trail is widely welcomed and will help more local people to walk and cycle for everyday journeys and open up access to the city's precious green spaces.

We support calls for a clear understanding of how local authorities manage transport projects, and a fuller public disclosure of what has caused the cost overruns. We understand that the collapse of Carillion and the Covid-19 pandemic have both delayed work and increased costs on the Chisholm Trail project, but there seems to be a pattern of cost overruns on transport – other examples being the Ely bypass at £13 million over budget and the A14 at £700 million over budget – and this urgently needs to be investigated to prevent the issue recurring.

Research from active travel charity Sustrans estimates that the current level of cycling in Greater Cambridge saves the region over £100 million a year in healthcare costs and delivers additional benefits in terms of reducing congestion and air pollution.

The Abbey-Chesterton bridge and Stourbridge Common underpass work must be completed soon as they are crucial connections in the walking and cycling network and local residents have been inconvenienced for far too long already. The Newmarket Road underpass is vital for the full benefit of the Chisholm Trail to be realised and it is essential that works on Coldham's Common begin in the coming weeks or we risk significant delays that will then impact other sections of the Trail. The whole project should be finished as soon as possible so that local residents can make use of this new sustainable route, unlocking city-wide benefits for all.

Will the committee reassure us of the timescale for the remaining stages of the work and commit to increasing the budget as needed? This infrastructure needs to last for generations and must be finished properly in order that everyone can reap the benefits.

**Written response from Councillor Bates:**

Major projects are subject to various control environments to understand risk and maintain scheme value within budget constraints. Nationally significant projects such as HS2, Crossrail or the A14 under construction by Highways England are extremely complex. As part of the Treasury Business Case there is an expectation on those promoting schemes to understand the range of risks within projects and to price those accordingly. Equally there is a need to review at an individual project level when and where variance to programme or cost occurs.

Whilst not at the same scale as the A14, the Ely Bypass was a complex project which has already been reported to Audit and Accounts and set out in minutes of the 29th July 2019 meeting "The causes for the expenditure exceeding the approved budget was considered to be the clear desire of key stakeholders to get the Project completed in the shortest timescales possible, with the Project Board agreeing, a shorter design and tender period which resulted in the form of contract (NEC Option D) used and resulted in the original cost estimate not being sufficiently robust...The increase in costs resulted from under assessing initially the requirements in terms of the piling costs of the viaduct and rail bridge with other contributory

costs being the earth works and the large increase in structural steelwork costs.” Internal Audit noted that “The Council had paid the right amount regarding the Project that had been delivered.”

As discussed in Committee earlier this year, the Executive Director of Place and Economy commissioned a review of major project delivery, which is considering the range and extent of management action to continuously improve processes and procedures in design, development and delivery and a range of changes are being brought in and we are confident this will improve the Council’s performance.

Your support for the Chisholm Trail project is welcome, and issues surrounding the project have recently been reported including project completion dates for the bridge and Phase 1 of the Trail. This is an ambitious project and will be transformative in terms of how journeys on bike and walking are being prioritised in order to realise the health benefits, reduce congestion and the associated issues of air quality, and to allow Greater Cambridge to grow sustainably within the ambition to be carbon neutral by 2050. The Newmarket Road underpass is scheduled to be constructed in Spring 2021. The project team are in dialogue with DfT/Sustrans regarding the Coldhams Common link and are planning to start this section early in the New Year.

You will note from the Committee and report that Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership are committed to completing the project in 2021, with the additional funding identified within the report, subject to approval at the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership Executive Board which is sitting on the 10th December 2020.