

Minutes



To: All Members of the Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel, Chief Executive, Chief Officers, All officers named for 'actions'

From: Legal, Democratic & Statutory Services
Ask for: Theresa Baker
Ext: 26545

HIGHWAYS AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET PANEL 1 July 2019

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

P Bibby (Chairman), R AC Thake (substituting for E H Buckmaster (Vice Chairman)), S B A F H Giles-Medhurst, S K Jarvis, J R Jones, J G L King, R Mills, M B J Mills-Bishop, M D M Muir, R G Parker, R H Smith, J A West.

OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

D A Ashley

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel meeting on 1 July 2019 as circulated, copy annexed, conclusions were reached and are recorded below:

Note: No conflicts of interest were declared by any member of the Cabinet Panel in relation to the matters on which conclusions were reached at this meeting.

PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS

1. MINUTES

- 1.1 The Minutes of the Cabinet Panel meeting held on 10 April 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. PUBLIC PETITIONS

ACTIONS

2.A PETITION FOR REVIEW OF PERMANENT SOLUTION TO THE NARROW BRIDGE AT HARPER LANE

[Officer Contact: James Dale, Area Development Management Manager (Tel: 01992 556120)]

2.1 Scott Maclachlan presented the petition below and addressed the Panel on the subject of the petition:

“We the undersigned petition the County Council to implement a permanent solution to the narrow bridge at Harper Lane that does not cause the severe congestion caused by 3 way traffic lights. The preferred solution is a wider bridge, but failing that a separate foot bridge for bikes and pedestrians is acceptable.

The short term solution for 6 months of 3 way lights that is proposed until road works are completed is already causing severe traffic chaos. The long term solution proposed is also 3 way lights with a pedestrian and bike path and single file traffic over the bridge. Obviously no analysis of traffic flows was done and traffic will only get worse with the Bloor Housing Development on Harper Lane.

The Council have to come up with an acceptable long term solution which either widens the existing bridge or adds a 2nd foot bridge with ramps up either side for bikes and prams.”

The petition had 1053 valid signatures. The Chairman received the petition.

The petitioner’s speech (Supplementary Document 1), a letter to the panel from Bloor Homes confirming they would be pleased to implement the approved scheme should the panel recommend it (Supplementary Document 2), and an email from local members to the panel in support of the petition (Supplementary Document 3) can viewed at:

<https://democracy.hertfordshire.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=216&MId=262>

2.2 The Panel received a report in response to the petition and noted the issues considered during the pre planning process for the Bloor Homes planning application to develop the Harperbury Lane Hospital site into 206 dwellings. As a consequence of these deliberations the transport assessment had identified a series of off-site highway measures including a major upgrade to the A518/Watling Street/Harper Lane junction. The report also took into consideration discussion of the petition issues at a subsequent meeting undertaken as part of the petitions process, between the lead petitioner, Executive Member (Highways and the Environment),

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local councillors and officers, where the petition issues had been fully considered. In addition, discussions at a further meeting of local members, the Executive Member (Highways and Environment) and officers were taken into account.

2.3 Members heard that in view of the requirement for provision of and Bloor Homes' demonstration that they could deliver a planning compliant scheme and satisfy the highway requirements to deliver a LTP4 compliant development, the additional cost of any solution other than introduction of a footway/cycleway plus traffic signals at the A518/Watling Street/Harper Lane junction (e.g. a wider or additional footbridge) would have to be secured from sources other than the developer. Consequently, without the certainty that additional funds for these expensive options could be found, officers supported the construction of the proposed junction.

2.4 Officers clarified that installation of pedestrian operated lights had not been considered during the process. Officers had concluded that a separate pedestrianised call phase would likely require signalisation of Watling Street at the same time i.e. the signalising option proposed by the developer (cf.-points 4.5 and 4.6 the report).

2.5 For clarification, officers confirmed that the junction works would cost the developer c. £400k, in addition, the developer had implemented a new Pegasus crossing in Harper Lane near the access and upgraded footway/cycleway between the development and Watling Street. Further financial contributions had been secured from the developer for upgraded rights of way and significant improvements in public transport serving the site. Members questioned whether development management had applied sufficient pressure to the developer.

2.6 To ensure that incumbent local members were kept 'in the loop' on developments in their divisions regardless of time elapsed since grant of planning permission and changes of local member/officer, the Panel requested that a process be developed to notify local members of any off-site works associated with large developments, thus ensuring their early involvement and the opportunity to input to development management, with a notified single point of officer contact in relation to all the issues stemming from the development

R Thacker

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- 2.7 During discussion officers:
- Clarified that modelling of the proposed signalised junction demonstrated that during peak hours any queuing traffic will clear within one full cycle of the traffic signals, the longest delay being 2 minutes;
 - Clarified that to test the modelling (ideally for 12 months, but at least 6 months, to take account of seasonal flows including the impact of the school calendar) and allay resident's concerns that they would be left with permanent traffic lights which might cause the same delays as the recently used temporary ones, a temporary layout of the permanent scheme was suggested which could be permanently constructed or partially removed if unsuccessful;
 - Emphasised that the proposed traffic light system would use modern intelligent technology, with phasings altered depending on traffic flows.
- 2.8 Members requested that officers consult with the Chief Legal Officer on seeking assurance that Bloor Homes offer a unilateral undertaking that they would not seek to pursue a claim against Hertfordshire County Council in the event that the trial failed and the proposed changes were not permanently implemented. R Thacker
- 2.9 To concern that delays caused by large construction vehicle traffic to and from the development could skew the trial, officers clarified that they had limited powers to control construction traffic but would take into consideration the construction phase plans. Construction vehicle weight limits were already in place on the surrounding network and the site access had been constructed. R Thacker
- 2.10 Cllr. D Ashley emphasised that as per the focus of LTP 4, the carriageway reduction to a single lane width across the bridge with the remaining width to be constructed as a continuation of the new off-road cycle route along Harper Lane, would provide a pedestrian/cycling link across the bridge and, although few people currently walked or cycled across the bridge, this safe route should encourage future residents of the development to move to these modes of transport.
- 2.11 Officers emphasised that, as there were as yet no residents living in the development to potentially use the pedestrian/cycle route along the bridge, it would be inappropriate to base the success of the trial on only the present behaviour of traffic on the bridge. R Thacker
- 2.12 The Panel agreed on the need to proceed and following discussion of an appropriate length of time for the trial, the chairman proposed and the panel agreed to recommend that officers respond to the petition in line with the report and explanations, stressing that the

panel were recommending that in 3.2. (ii) the trial be undertaken for at least 6 months but depending on how the traffic flows were gauged.

J West voted against the proposal.

Conclusions:

2.13 The Panel recommended:

- i The scheme as approved through the planning process to implement a signal controlled junction facilitating a dedicated footway/cycleway facility over the bridge on Harper Lane to proceed;
- ii The scheme to be delivered by the developer be implemented in a manner which temporarily, for at least 6 months depending on how the traffic flows were gauged, provided the footway/cycleway on the bridge to enable the scheme to be assessed in advance of any permanent footway construction being undertaken. This enables modification to the junction, including the potential removal of the signals and footway / cycleway to be considered if traffic conditions are significantly impacted by the scheme.
- iii That widening the existing bridge, an additional bridge or an alternative route are not pursued as they are not viable at this stage.

3. FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

[Officer Contact:

Steven Pilsworth, Assistant Director Finance (Tel: 01992 555143);
Faisal Mir- Assistant Director, Finance & Business Support
(Tel: 019923 555737)]

- 3.1 Members considered a report outlining the current overall financial outlook for the Council and requesting their views on areas where further work could be undertaken to identify future savings as part of the forthcoming Integrated Plan (IP) process.
- 3.2 The Panel learnt of the increasing financial challenges associated with the national political uncertainties surrounding Brexit and leadership, and the impact that this was generating on central government decision making on matters such as the Spending Review, and the future of individual grant funding. It was acknowledged that whilst officers were actively lobbying government to provide certainty, it was necessary to plan for a 'worst case' scenario when budget planning.

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- 3.3 In response to a Member question, it was clarified that councillors were able to seek appropriate alternative or match funding where possible for local highways maintenance and locality projects.
- 3.4 It was confirmed that School Travel Plans are still in existence, and demand for information to populate these remained high.
- 3.5 It was further confirmed that whilst there were no plans for efficiencies in the school crossing patrol budget, Members were reminded that sites where school crossing patrols are in existence are locations where the council review vacancies regularly. These can be subject to the funding being removed should it be judged that the provision is no longer warranted.
- 3.6 In response to a Member challenge regarding the need to receive an increase in the amount of income received from property developers for highway provision, it was advised that the Growth, Infrastructure, Planning and the Economy Panel would be reviewing the toolkit used to calculate contributions at its meeting on 1 July 2019.
- 3.7 During discussion, broad agreement was reached that officers should explore options for working in closer partnership with Local Planning Authorities with the view to undertaking robust joint negotiations with prospective developers and to increase the use of Community Infrastructure Levies to generate an increased level of income. It was also noted that the Council should work to ensure that Planning Inspectors were aware of the broader implications of any decision they make. M Kemp
- 3.8 Further to a Member question, it was agreed that officers would ascertain how many members of the public took part in the consultation on the Council Tax levy as outlined at point 15c of Appendix 1 of the report. B Jay
- 3.9 During discussion, officers were asked to consider the reduction of grass cutting in central reservations and roadsides as this would not only promote the growth of wildflowers, which was beneficial to the environment, but would also create budget savings. It was noted that this policy had been adopted successfully in Rotherham. M Kemp
- 3.10 Officers were also asked to consider whether the current budget of £1,524k allocated 2020/21 to 2022/23 to the procurement of new highways contracts could be reduced. M Kemp
- 3.11 Further to a Member challenge, it was clarified that it had been a reduction in appropriate potential prosecutions coming through from Hertfordshire Constabulary that had led to a reduction in appropriate

referrals for driver offender retraining.

- 3.12 Members received assurance that any final decisions for budget savings would be made further to consultation with Members through a future meeting of the Highways and Environment Panel. Public consultation would be undertaken on a case by case basis.

Conclusions:

- 3.13 Members noted and commented upon the financial position and options outlined within the report, as detailed above.

4. WINTER SERVICE OPERATIONAL PLAN (WSOP)

[Officer Contact: Richard Stacey, Assistant Network Manager (Strategy) (Tel: 01992 658115)]

- 4.1 The panel received a report on the operation of the 2018/19 season Winter Service Operational Plan (WSOP), outlined development of the WSOP for 2019/20, sought the panel's comments prior to publication of the WSOP for the 2019/20 season and provided an update on the 10 Year winter service review and development programme.
- 4.2 Officers clarified that that the Golden Thread was used by highway authorities as a means of enabling officers to link the various plans and strategies together.
- 4.3 During discussion Members heard that, in line with the majority of surrounding authorities, reduction of the intervention level for treatment from 1^oC to 0.5^oC was being considered in Hertfordshire, the decision to go down this route being influenced by environmental factors and the advent of improved forecasting. The need to grit takes into account a number of factors including temperature, moisture and residual salt levels. To concern that this could impact road safety, officers clarified that the road surface temperature was measured and the gritting decision based on the readings from 13 weather stations situated at known low road surface temperature sites on rural, urban and fast roads. An element of professional judgement remained, however with the passage of time the equipment and information available on screen to the duty officer had improved.
- 4.4 Officers confirmed that if the 0.5^oC intervention level been applied to the 2018/19 period there would have been 40 gritting runs as opposed to 42 and that the level would be monitored to ensure that it remained appropriate.

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- 4.5 For clarity the Panel requested that the fourth bullet point of the recommendations (which related to paragraph 7 of the report) was changed to read 4. 'Notes the proposed review and 10 year programme'
- 4.6 Acknowledging that the WSOP for 2019-20 could not be simplified as it was a legal document and used in court when required, the Panel requested that officers simplify pages 16 and 17 of it on the council's website so that the public and Members could identify which roads would be treated, when the decision to grit was taken, and those that would not because they were on the secondary network. R Stacey
- 4.7 The Panel also requested that officers make clear for Members on the website what comprised the resilience network and for the public what comprised priority 2a. R Stacey
- 4.8 Officers agreed to correct the intervention levels shown on page 27 of the WSOP so that they aligned with the policy for 2019-20. R Stacey

Conclusions:

- 4.9 The Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel:
1. Commented as above on the Winter Service Operational Plan 2019/20 prior to its publication on the County Council's website (with the personal data redacted);
 2. Recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet agree the Winter Service Operational Plan 2019/20;
 3. Recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet agree that the intervention level for gritting action be reduced from 1.0°C to 0.5°C in line with other authorities.
 4. Noted the proposed review and 10 year programme.

5. HIGHWAYS & ENVIRONMENT PERFORMANCE MONITOR - COVER REPORT

[Officer Contact: Sarah Lockyer, Contracts and Performance Manager (Tel: 01992 658206)]

- 5.1 The Panel received the Highways and Environment Service, including Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW), overall performance report for Q4 2018-2019 (January-March 2019).
- 5.2 Members heard that of the 10 themes, three (Efficiency and Value

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for Money, Locality, and Network Management) had improved, whilst one theme (Operational Delivery) had decreased by 0.2 compared to Q3. Overall performance for Q4 had increased slightly to 2.16, the highest score since the introduction of the current performance regime was introduced 2 years ago

5.3 During discussion Members were reminded that they had agreed changes to the arrangements for the Highway Liaison Meetings (HLM) at the 10 April 2019 panel and consequently the Q4 data provided only historic data and did not reflect the new attendance. Officers agreed to detail in HLM graph commentary the fact that the measurement related to the number of County Councillors attending the HLM meetings and the number of meetings held in each quarter.

S Johnson

5.4 Members heard that the Service was engaging apprenticeships at all levels, including master's degrees, to access the funds the Council paid into the apprenticeship levy. 'Grow your own' was considered a potential solution to the difficulties experienced in retaining staff due to the county's proximity to London. WSP and Arup were working with the Council to develop apprenticeships spanning their businesses and the Council, which accounted for the substantial increase in the proportion of the apprentices in WSP.

5.5 Officers clarified that all insurance claims were considered in the context of their legitimacy in relation to any failure of the service. Inspection of every single road at least once per year and dealing appropriately with every fault reported provided a robust highways regime against which to measure the service provided. The claim rejection target provided an indication of the robustness of the service being delivered. Where a claim was legitimately made against the level of service the cause was investigated to improve the service. Rejection of insurance claims was one of many data sets used to measure the service's performance. Members observed that the 80% target for rejecting insurance claims could be misconstrued.

5.6 Officers clarified that performance on grass cutting was audited during April to November at sites selected at random, the grass being measured to ensure it was no higher than contract specification; it was noted that the operatives were required only to blow back the cuttings on to the grass verge once. Members heard that in some areas the District/Borough Councils would cut their grass to a different standard to highways which was often challenged by customers due to the different appearance. Officers agreed to bring back to panel the data for audit failure of grass cutting and also to look for examples of 'lumpy grass cutting on verges' observed by Members.

S Johnson

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- 5.7 Members heard that when they did not agree to extension of the 5 day target response time to an enquiry it would be recorded as a failure if the original 5 day target was not met.

- 5.8 In explanation of the triggers for movement from red to amber to green (RAG) on graphs such as 'Complaints escalated beyond stage 1', officers clarified that as the report was still evolving many graphs only displayed a performing zone rather than a RAG status and agreed to put 'performing and review and failing zone on those affected. S Johnson

- 5.9 Officers agreed to investigate the data presentation on the graph of 'Income from Development Management,' which bore a descending unlabelled grey line and included negative cumulative amounts making the graph unintelligible. S Johnson

- 5.10 In view of the LTP4 focus on modal shift officers agreed to bring the annual report on Road Traffic Casualties to the panel including the data on road user type. S Johnson
K Kemp

Conclusions:

- 5.11 The Cabinet Panel noted the report and commented on the performance monitor for Quarter 4 2018/19.

6 OTHER PART I BUSINESS

- 6.1 There was no other business.

QUENTIN BAKER
CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER

CHAIRMAN _____

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