

# 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

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## HIGHWAYS AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET PANEL 21 November 2019

### ATTENDANCE

#### MEMBERS OF THE PANEL

P Bibby (Chairman), E H Buckmaster (Vice Chairman), S B A F H Giles-Medhurst, S K Jarvis, J R Jones, M A Eames-Petersen (substituted for J G L King), J Billing (substituted for R Mills), M B J Mills-Bishop, M D M Muir, J Hale (substituted for R G Parker), R H Smith, J A West, C B Woodward.

#### OTHER MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel meeting on 21 November 2019 as circulated, copy annexed, conclusions were reached and are recorded below:

*C B Woodward declared an interest as recorded at item 3.*

*M B J Mills Bishop declared an interest as recorded at item 3.*

#### PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS

#### ACTIONS

1. **MINUTES**
  - 1.1 The Minutes of the Cabinet Panel meeting held on 11 September 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
2. **PUBLIC PETITIONS**
  - 2.A **RESPONSE TO A PETITION CONCERNING HIGHWAY SAFETY IN HORSESHOE LANE, WATFORD**

[Officer Contact: Ian Thompson, Highway Locality Manager  
(Tel: 01992 658175)]

- 2.1 Tim Williams presented the petition below and addressed the Panel on the subject of the petition:

*“We the undersigned, call upon Hertfordshire County Council, as our Highways Authority, to work with local schools, to implement highway safety measures along this stretch of Horseshoe Lane to reduce accidents and collisions before a more serious accident occurs”.*

The petition had attracted 326 valid signatures at the date of receipt by the County Council.

- 2.2 The Panel received a report in response to the petition. Members noted that traffic calming for the section of Horseshoe Lane concerned comprised flat topped road humps and a 30mph speed limit and that there were pedestrian and cycle facilities.

- 2.3 The Panel heard that Francis Coombe Academy, Garston Manor School and St Catherine of Siena lacked a travel plan to encourage safe and sustainable travel on the school journey. It was noted that the report contained a recommendation to organise a meeting between the schools, Highways officers, the Active and Safer Travel team, the petitioner i.e. the Local Member for Woodside Stanborough who is also a Watford Borough Councillor, and the Borough Council being responsible for parking in the area, to assist the schools to be more active in their highway safety message to parents/pupils and travel plan development.

- 2.4 On hearing that the early November interviews for a school crossing patrol post had been unsuccessful, Members suggested that: the post might prove attractive to a broader spectrum of applicants if also advertised on a job share/rota basis; to improve recruitment attempts should be made to contact people not currently being reached. Officers clarified that although a niche form of employment, i.e. two 45 minutes sessions of work each school day, thorough checks and procedures were necessary to ensure the right people were being employed. However, these systems would be examined to ensure they were streamlined and did not deter / lose applicants during the process.

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- 2.5 Following the petitioner’s welcome of the October cutting down to ground level of vegetation to improve visibility for vehicles exiting St Catherine of Siena school, and his further request for extension of this cutting to include from the allotment entrance down to the A405, the Panel was updated that officers and the contractor would be on site the following week in regard of this.

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- 2.6 In his speech the petitioner highlighted that lack of maintenance to the off-road pedestrian and cycle facilities and on-carriageway cycle lane on Horseshoe Lane reduced the likelihood of use and did not progress LTP4.
- 2.7 Members highlighted the downhill nature of the section of Horseshoe Lane under consideration, which encouraged traffic (including cyclists) to move quickly past the traffic calming features.
- 2.8 Further to this, for people wishing to go towards Garston, lack of a footpath outside Frances Coombe Academy and also from the layby on the east side of Horseshoe Lane (located near Garston Manor School) to All Saints Crescent / The Glebe resulted in a large number of people having to cross the Lane to the west side (i.e. to the Leisure Centre side). Acknowledging that physical issues made it unfeasible to introduce a footpath to this eastern section of the Lane, Members suggested that to encourage speed reduction, officers and the schools consider a 'schools safety zone' indicating that motorists were approaching 3 schools, with additional flashing warning speed signs in both directions, particularly at school opening and closing times. Officers clarified that a school safety zone already existed on Horseshoe Lane, including flashing wigwag signs between the A405 and St Catherine of Siena school and further north just past Newhouse Crescent.
- 2.9 Referencing the suggestion in the petitioner's speech to consider a 20mph zone, the Panel suggested the option of an advisory 20mph zone; this could operate during school pick up and drop off times and at other times the limit would be 30mph as currently. Members highlighted that although not enforceable, such zones were very successful. Officers confirmed that existing average speeds needed to be below 30mph for this to be considered. It was highlighted that the current Speed Management Strategy was being reviewed with member input from the Members Advisory Group. Officers were asked to consider the feasibility of a 20mph zone.
- 2.10 To Member disappointment at the age of the speed data used officers advised that up to date speed data could be provided in the new year by funding from Members' HLB. Officers clarified that a recent accident outside Francis Coombe Academy was not recorded in the statistics as these covered the 5-year period up to June 2019. Two of the 3 incidents which had occurred during school times outside Garston Manor & St Catherine of Siena schools were due to a vehicle turning into or out of a school access road & colliding with a cyclist.
- 2.11 Officers further clarified that if consideration of additional footway provision was required, feasibility studies would be necessary and could also be funded from Local Members' HLBs.
- 2.12 In acknowledgement of the Panel's support for a 20mph zone, the

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following amendment to the officer recommendation at paragraph 3.2 of the report was proposed and unanimously agreed:

*In this instance officers recommend that further work is undertaken by proposing a meeting between representatives from the Active and Safer Travel and Highways teams and the three schools. The purpose being to assist the schools in developing a school travel plan and to discuss their concerns **and the feasibility of a 20mph school zone to be considered.***

**Conclusions:**

- 2.13 In line with recommendation 3.1.(ii) to the report and the officer recommendation at 3.2 to the report as amended at 2.12 above, the Panel recommended that officers undertake further work by proposing a meeting between representatives from the Active and Safer Travel and Highways teams and the three schools; the purpose being to assist the schools in developing a school travel plan and to discuss their concerns and the feasibility of a 20mph zone to be considered.

**3. SUSTAINABLE HERTFORDSHIRE STRATEGY – UPDATE**

[Officer Contact: Mark Kemp, Director of Environment & Infrastructure (Tel: 01992 556130)]

- 3.1 The Panel considered a report on the work and progress made following the County Council's 16 July 2019 declaration of a Climate Emergency and the scope of future work to meet the December 2019 deadline for a draft Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy.
- 3.2 Members learned that the new Corporate Plan 2019-25 and the declaration had stimulated a more holistic approach to sustainability and that the Strategy would cover both environmental and social issues. A coordinated and comprehensive approach would encompass pre-existing and ongoing work, and what can be done in the future, the primary focus being Council operation, services and activity itself and what it had control over; the expectation being that 'once Hertfordshire County Council's house is in order' expanding actions to help with countywide sustainability issues was logical.
- 3.3 During discussion Members variously observed that:
- Policies were required to enable Hertfordshire's businesses to reduce their emissions;
  - Even if a review of highway assets had already been undertaken further review should be undertaken in relation to the sustainability strategy;
  - Engagement was required with the younger generation who were likely to be more greatly affected by climate change;

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- Local Planning Authorities needed to persuade developers to engage with the climate change agenda e.g. heating houses other than by gas;
- The majority of Hertfordshire’s district and borough councils had declared a Climate Emergency and their chief executives were trying to produce an overall strategy, rather than separate ones, which would result in a greater impact countywide;
- Working example role models that the Council had control over should be included in the strategy e.g. Herts for Living (HFL) and Council property.

**Conclusions:**

3.4 The Panel noted and supported the content of the paper, the project Scope (prepared by consultants WSP) (Appendix A), the Hertfordshire County Council project briefing note (Appendix B) and the programme timetable (Appendix C).

**4. UPDATE REPORT ON TREE HEALTH ISSUES AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

[Officer Contact: Jeremy Clarke, Tree Health Project Officer  
(Tel: 01992 588886)]

*C B Woodward declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 3 as he is a trustee of Birchanger Wood Management Trust in Bishops Stortford; he remained in the room and participated in the debate and vote.*

*M B J Mills Bishop declared a non-pecuniary interest as he is the county representative on the Local Access Forum; he remained in the room and participated in the debate and vote.*

4.1 The Panel received a report which provided a current assessment of how emerging tree health threats were likely to impact Hertfordshire (i.e. Ash dieback, Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) Asian Longhorn Beetle, Xylella, climate change and urbanisation, the declining health of aging tree stocks) and actions in response to recommendations of the Resources and Performance Panel for managing tree health risk, with a view to endorsement of recommendations for further action to prepare for and respond to tree health threats.

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- 4.2 Members learned that central government’s commitment to protect and increase the nation’s tree cover and improve landowners’ management of trees could be impacted by the human and environmental factors itemised in paragraph 4.1 above, with a resultant overall decline in tree health. Support for Local Authorities to address these threats was likely to involve competitive application for a limited budget and require development of a Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy to demonstrate adequate planning.
- 4.3 Members were updated that recently published DNA mapping data of ash trees affected by dieback had identified genes already known to provide resistance to pests and diseases in other species. It was likely to be some years before new variants became available for planting, by which time most current standing susceptible ash stocks would have fallen or been removed to ensure public safety. However, these variants could be used for future restocking.
- 4.4 Officers clarified that although a Public Health issue, based on current research findings, OPM was not a concern for the trees. Diversification of the tree species planted to replace former rurally dominant species e.g. Ash, would reduce the likelihood of extensive tree population decline at any one time.
- 4.5 Following Panel’s welcome of the concept of a Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy Members variously commented that:
- From their own experience active woodland management worked;
  - Hertfordshire’s Strategy would be impacted by the actions of neighbouring counties, as pests and pathogens crossed borders;
  - The concept of the Green Gym should be embedded in the Strategy, as these free guided outdoor sessions in practical activities, e.g. tree planting, emphasised health and fitness;
  - To reduce the number of tree pathogens inadvertently introduced via non-native tree species, when giving planning consents, Local Planning Authorities should specify the species of every tree planted;
  - To avoid unanticipated changes in streetscape, consideration should be given to the species of any replacement tree planted;
  - Replacement trees which suffered damage should receive remedial care to ensure their continued viability;
  - For every tree removed, two more should be replanted;
  - County Council land unsuitable for farming could be allocated for public planting of large areas of trees via clubs and societies;
  - Tree planting could also be undertaken in smaller areas e.g. unused areas of school land;
  - A ‘neighbourhood watch’ on trees (e.g. tree health issues) would encourage communities to ‘own’ their trees and identify issues;
  - Situations where there was an apparent disconnect, e.g. removal of tree bearing hedges in favour of bridle paths, should be considered;
  - Developer damage to and replacement of trees should be addressed.

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- 4.6 To Member challenge that the report focussed on rural trees, officers clarified that unlike rural areas, where only a few species made up tree population, and so disease in any one such species had a significant impact, the greater tree species variety in urban areas meant that tree pests / diseases affected individual trees, but were unlikely to substantially affect tree populations.
- 4.7 The following issues were raised in relation to the Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy and urban trees:
- many urban trees planted in the 1950s/60s were now declining due to age and disease;
  - the strategy should address where to plant replacement trees in the near vicinity of urban verge trees requiring removal due to age and disease associated with root damage, caused by utility location within the verge;
  - replacement of urban trees was important from a Public Health perspective because of the contribution they made to removing gaseous air pollution and particulates from the atmosphere.
- 4.8 During discussion of tree surveying, officers clarified that the Highway Tree Management Strategy required trees in urban areas to be inspected on an approximate 3-year cycle. However, the extent of the highway tree network, cost of tree inspections and funding pressures meant that some might not have been inspected in the last three years. Inspectors, generally from districts and boroughs who look after many highway trees on behalf of the County Council via agency agreements, recorded the species and growth of each tree and plotted the geo-location on the EzyTreev mapping system.
- 4.9 A Member expressed concern that little remedy was received in response to urban tree issues reported on the Highways Fault Reporting System (e.g. tree root heave of pavements, branch interference with overhead lines, verge cutting damage to tree trunks, follow up action to tree vandalism, replacement of removed pavement trees). Further to this, the reactive, rather than proactive, approach of the Highways Tree Management Strategy to problem highway trees in urban areas was a false economy and resulted in further costs to replace removed trees and repair / replace damaged surroundings e.g. pavements/ footways.
- 4.10 Officers emphasised that the Highways Tree Management Strategy had to prioritise dealing with dead, diseased and dangerous trees on the general urban highway and, due to pressures on other parts of the Highways budget, general routine tree maintenance was not undertaken.
- 4.11 Officers clarified that the location of damaged trees on new housing developments could be reported to development management, who could attempt to contact developers about replacement

4.12 The Panel was advised that the Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy's development would take time but would be brought back to panel as soon as possible. Members heard that due to the relatively recent government call for Local Authorities to develop a Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy none had yet been created. Therefore, to start the process, a DEFRA run workshop on how to approach it was scheduled for December 2019. This is for officers and in-county partners, with experts in attendance, and a further strategy meeting was scheduled in January 2020 for the wider Hertfordshire family.

4.13 Following Member focus on the importance of trees to carbon removal from the atmosphere the following additions to recommendation 3.2 were suggested:  
*(i) That the County Council looks at land it could allocate to plant small and large woods with the involvement of volunteers;*  
*(ii) For any tree removed on any Hertfordshire County Council land to be replanted with two standard trees, and in situations where the original was removed from highway land, one of the replacements preferably to be on highways land.*

4.14 The chairman and members variously observed that the amendments were too prescriptive for a nascent Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy. However, to ensure that these suggestions were not lost, officers agreed to convert amendment (i) into action by referring it to the Assistant Director (Property) and to pass back to the Panel what could be undertaken on this issue.

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4.15 In relation to amendment (ii), officers advised that replacement of a removed tree was not a simple undertaking and was situation / location dependent, as was the number of replacement trees used.

4.16 Officers clarified that the Highway Tree Management Strategy would be updated once the detail of the finalised Sustainable Herts Strategy and Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy were known; it would include urban tree management issues and would be brought back to the Panel. Officers also highlighted that the current Highway Tree Management Strategy was available on the County Council website, and a summary would be provided for the next Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy report to panel.

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4.17 In view of Members' comments, the Panel agreed that following amendment to recommendation 3.2:  
*That Cabinet Panel endorses officers' proposal for the development of a Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy to guide and inform a planned and coordinated response to predicted declines in Hertfordshire's treescape and to consider the comments made by the panel.*

**Conclusions:**

- 4.18 The Cabinet Panel:
1. noted the content of the report;
  2. endorsed officers' proposal for the development of a Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy to guide and inform a planned and coordinated response to predicted declines in Hertfordshire's treescape and to consider the comments made by the panel.

**5. HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN (HIAMP) 2019**

[Officer Contact: Chris Allen-Smith, Head of Profession, Asset Management & Maintenance (Tel: 01992 658167)]

- 5.1 The Panel received a report on the updated Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP), which replaces the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP), with a view to seeking the Members' comments and the Panel's recommendation that Cabinet approve the Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan.
- 5.2 Members heard the new HIAMP had evolved from the TAMP and incorporated national / local changes that had occurred since the TAMP had been published in 2008, as well as continuing to build on latest good practice and advances in the field. The HIAMP's alignment with the Council's LTP4 objectives was important and the continued focus on good asset management meant that it also acted as key evidence for meeting the DfT's annual Incentive Fund requirements. It set out the proposed approach to developing and implementing future policies, strategies and programmes, i.e. it provided asset management-based guidance but not standards and did not change the operational strategies that sat below it.
- 5.3 Officers clarified that on the initial page of appendix 1 to the report, within the policy for Highway Infrastructure Asset Management the phrase '*The Highways Service helps make Hertfordshire the County of Opportunity by Moving Hertfordshire Forward*' conveyed Highways' vision of how it contributed to the corporate objective of 'We want Hertfordshire to continue to be a county where people have the opportunity to live healthy fulfilling lives in thriving prosperous communities', i.e. by delivering safe, reliable journeys sustainably.
- 5.4 It was further clarified as the HIAMP was a high-level strategic document, work across highways assets was addressed in lower level documents, e.g. the Maintenance for Active Travel Strategy and One and Done Strategy. The HIAMP's modular structure enabled changes / updating of strategies without requiring wholesale change to the whole HIAMP.

**Conclusions:**

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- 5.5 1. The Panel noted and commented on the updated Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan;  
2. The Panel is recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet approve the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan.

5.6 Councillor M B J Mills Bishop left the meeting.

**6. TRANSPORT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN, ASSET PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19**

[Officer Contact: Chris Allen-Smith, Head of Profession, Asset Management & Maintenance (Tel: 01992 658167)]

6.1 The Panel received the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP), Asset Performance Report for 2018/19 (APR) with a view to seeking Members' comments on it and the Panel's recommendation for Cabinet to endorse the TAMP APR 2018/19.

The report also included consideration of the motion referred to the Panel at County Council on 16 July 2019 regarding the use of surface treatments, the motion being: *"This Council resolves to register its concern about the continued use of "stone chipping" micro-surfacing in urban roads and the problems this causes in low volume roads and where there are parked cars. It requests the Executive Member for Highways and Environment to bring forward a report on the suitability of this treatment and other alternatives"*.

6.2 Members heard that the purpose of the TAMP APR report was to highlight any upcoming issues in Hertfordshire and nationally, provide an ongoing record of programme delivery and performance, and a general progress update on asset management.

6.3 Members expressed concern that in spite of the LTP4 focus on modal change, spending on footways and cycleways had decreased by £1m since 2016/17, formed only 11% of the 2018/19 Highway Infrastructure Assets spending, and that the serviceability of this asset was declining as evidenced by the £2.5m of Member HLB spending on it. Officers advised that an additional £1m would be targeted on this asset in 2020/21. Members requested a list of additional schemes that would arise from this increase in IWP funding.

C Allen-Smith

6.4 In response to challenge on the overall spending for 2018/19 shown in Table 5 (Expenditure Overview for all Highways Infrastructure Assets 2015/16-2018/19), officers clarified that the one off £7.4m of government highways maintenance funding received, the 'Pot Hole Fund', had arrived too late in the financial year to be included in the IWP. Members heard that the table covered only IWP scheme-based programmes of work and did not include Cat 1, Cat 2 and Cat 6 spending, and was being reviewed

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to ensure that it more closely reflected Highways financial output.

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- 6.5 During discussion of footway and cycleway issues, Members highlighted that the 2 yearly surveys did not pick up trip hazards, ponding on footpaths, heavily worn cycle path markings which were a long time in being reinstated; further to this, maintenance was more cost efficient than having to replace the whole surface depth.
- 6.6 Following suggestion of a total footpath network survey to identify responsibility for condition improvement and increase serviceability for walking and cycling journeys, a Member suggested that Members could commission walking and cycling studies followed by walking them with the assistant highways locality manager to identify issues for funding by HLB, integrated works and alternative funding.
- 6.7 During discussion officers clarified the multifaceted issues associated with drainage performance could not be encompassed in a simple metric (e.g. ponding could occur where a functional drain outfall connected with a non-County Council smaller bore pipe). Highway flooding was being monitored however, as this could result from leaf blockage of drain covers or a more endemic issue, although in its infancy, remote sensor monitoring of vulnerable gullies was being considered. Although drainage performance measurement would remain an aspiration, the current focus was on monitoring to ensure available funds were targeted efficiently.
- 6.8 Members emphasised the disconnect between ponding at dropped kerbs and the intention to make a road easier to cross, particularly if pedestrians were directed there by a tactile surface. Officers clarified that this was often a product of the road's camber, linked to the fact that for accessibility reasons there was no upstand, and often occurred despite a nearby upstream functional drain. Due to the invasiveness and cost of remedy, Members' identification of these low priority CAT 2 sites, which were not visible to officers during dry periods, would enable their consideration when other work was being undertaken. In view of Member reporting of large numbers of ponded tactile dropped kerbs, officers agreed to consider whether their priority could be raised on the fault reporting system.
- 6.9 During discussion of the motion referred to the Panel at County Council on 16 July 2019, the Panel heard that the two main types of surface treatment used in Hertfordshire were surface dressing and micro asphalt. The former unfortunately received a poor response from the public, due to the loose stones that remained until bedded in by vehicle movements, and the necessary delay to white line repainting and sweeping up of the loose stones. Members' attention was drawn to the technical aspects of each treatment, the detail of the economic, efficiency and environmental benefits off each and the other proprietary surface treatments under consideration.

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6.10 Officers clarified that micro-asphalt was generally used in cul de sacs as it left fewer stone chippings. However, locations were considered individually, since surface dressing was more appropriate in some situations e.g. where there was a need to ensure the crown of the road profile was not raised; such assessment would continue.

6.11 To aid Members to interpret and better engage with the IWP information, officers agreed to include short codes and a simple key.

C Allen-Smith

6.12 Responding to Member challenge on the limited information provided by the Works Bulletin issued to residences on roads scheduled for resurfacing, and the irregular distribution of the accompanying surface treatment specific information leaflets, officers clarified that to improve communication, in advance of the next round of resurfacing, information would be made available on the Council's website explaining the benefits of early lifecycle resurfacing with links to the leaflets.

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### **Conclusions:**

6.13 The Panel:

1. Noted and commented as above on the Transport Asset Management Plan, Asset Performance Report 2018/19;
2. Considered the motion set out in Paragraph 1.2 & 6.1 of the report as attached at Appendix 2 to this report;
3. Recommend to Cabinet that Cabinet agree the endorsement of the Transport Asset Management Plan, Asset Performance Report 2018/19 (APR)

The Panel voted in favour of all three recommendations:

8 For: 3 Against: 1 Abstention.

(The Liberal Democrat Group voted against the recommendations).

6.14 Councillor J A West took up her place on the panel.

## **7. MAINTENANCE FOR ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY**

[Officer Contact: Juliet Cromack, Principal Engineer, Asset Management (Tel: 01992 658249);

Chris Allen-Smith, Head of Profession, Asset Management & Maintenance (Tel: 01992 658167)];

7.1 Members received a report on the Maintenance for Active Travel Strategy (MATS) which set out the opportunities for highway maintenance works to support Active Travel and initiatives to be referred to when undertaking maintenance works, with a view to seeking Panel's support for recommendation to Cabinet that it adopt MATS. The report also provided an update on responses provided at the 12 February 2019 Highways and

Environment Cabinet panel in relation to access issues for pedestrians, especially those with limited mobility.

7.2 Officers highlighted that MATS would guide designers and engineers on how to be aware of issues that could be barriers to active travel and on dealing with them as part of planned works. It was a work in progress and trials had been carried out / were being undertaken to determine if there were cost effective ways of delivering the removal of barriers to the Council's LTP4 objectives of people incorporating walking, cycling or public transport into their regular, daily journeys to work, school etc.

7.3 To Member challenge officers clarified that:

- The MATs Checklist for Footways and Cycleways (incorporating One and Done guidance) was not a comprehensive document since it had to be short enough for use by on-site highway engineers;
- The Checklist was not a scouting document (e.g. it did not include assessment of footway surface condition) since it was an aide memoire of issues to consider undertaking, cost effectively, whilst carrying out planned maintenance works – in other words where works to maintain the surface were already planned, the Checklist was intended to help identify *additional* opportunities;
- As the MATS was a Highways document, it applied to all footpaths managed by Highways and those managed on behalf of Countryside Management;
- Although a simple process, siding out of footpaths was not currently undertaken on a routine cyclical basis due to financial pressures; trials were being undertaken to see if it could be combined with other works;
- Issues would be added to the Checklist if it became necessary to be prescriptive in order to remove certain barriers to active travel;
- All lighting issues were covered by the Lighting Strategy; this was based on justified need, criteria being used to ascertain the need.
- As part of the 2019/20 Structures programme, some subways would be trialled for a focussed 'one and done' improvement including considering surfacing, walls and décor, drainage, lighting and structural condition. If successful, this pilot would lead to a subway conversation programme. However, LED lighting of subways would be undertaken when funding became available;
- Vertically trimmed vegetation, which was not accompanied by horizontal trimming, caused it overhang and impede cyclists and was an issue to be reinforced with operatives;
- With their in-depth divisional knowledge, Members could assist officers by providing suggestions for trials of cycle path routes which could be joined together.

7.4 The Panel highlighted that the following were missing from the checklist:

- missing and broken bollards;
- broken up tactile surfaces; these aided people with disabilities;

7.5 When officers clarified that the fault reporting map showed which footpaths were the responsibility of Highways, a Member highlighted that footpaths were not named, which caused problems when reporting faults.

7.6 In view of the length of time since the original motion had had been referred from County Council on 27 November 2018 to the 12 February 2019 Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel, and seeming lack progress on the second conclusion from that meeting i.e. 'A mechanism for reporting problems and raising disability and accessibility issues would be considered', a Member proposed the following amendment to the recommendation to the report under consideration:

*That steps be taken to amend the Defect Management Approach (DMA) to enable the reporting of disability and accessibility issues.*

Officers emphasised that this had been addressed in the current MATS report at 5.2.1. and highlighted that feedback had indicated it might be valuable to introduce to the DMA reporting system further categories for specific disability and accessibility issues, and that consideration of this would be undertaken as part of a future review of the DMA.

The Panel voted against the amendment:

5 For : 7 Against.

(The Liberal Democrat and Labour Groups voted in favour)

7.7 The Panel voted in favour of the original recommendation:

7 For : 5 Against.

(The Liberal Democrat and Labour Group voted against)

### **Conclusions:**

7.8 The Panel:

1. Considered the Maintenance for Active Travel Strategy
2. Recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet agree to adopt the Maintenance for Active Travel Strategy

## **8. ALTERNATIVE VERGE MAINTENANCE**

[Officer Contact: Mike Jarrett, Highways Operational Manager,  
(Tel: 01992 658376)]

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8.1 Members received a report on an alternative way of maintaining highway roadside verges that would protect and, in time, increase the amount and quality of pollinator habitat, with a view to seeking the Panel's recommendation to Cabinet that Cabinet agree this alternative approach during the 2020 maintenance season. The report also considered the motion referred to the Panel at County Council on 16 July 2019 requesting proposals to manage the maintenance of the highway in ways that improve bio diversity i.e.

*“This Council notes that a number of other highway authorities have adopted the planting of wild flowers and other alternative methods of managing highway verges that improve bio-diversity without increasing the cost of verge maintenance. Whilst recognising that there are areas where vegetation must be cut for reasons of highway safety it believes that there are opportunities for adopting such strategies on many of Hertfordshire's roads.*

*The Council notes that in March it agreed a motion on the Pollinator Action Plan and note that the Council has already recognised the need for such measures.*

*It also notes growing concern about the bio-diversity and potential health impacts of the widespread use of glyphosate weed killers on the edges of the highway network.*

*It requests the Executive Member for Highways and Environment to bring forward proposals to manage the maintenance of highway in ways that improve bio-diversity.”*

The Panel was requested to consider the motion in light of the proposition of an alternative verge maintenance approach, with a view to maintenance of the highway in ways that improve biodiversity.

8.2 Members heard that current research suggested that the Council's roadside verges could yield wildflowers to feed the local pollinators if the wild flowers were left to naturally flourish, or would have a better opportunity of doing so, by cutting selective verges less often, at the right time and removing the grass cuttings. In view of this a trial was proposed to determine the true costs of this proposed maintenance method, in particular the cost of collection and disposal of cuttings from the alternatively treated verges.

8.3 The Panel learned that the Enhanced Maintenance method would be trialled on the 250,000m<sup>2</sup> approx. of the rural swathe-cut verges on single carriageways that were most likely to already have medium to high quality of vegetation and species diversity. The first (and only) cut to the full width of these highway verges, between road edge and boundary hedge/fence, would occur between mid-July and mid-August, and the cuttings would be removed. The rest of the rural-swathe would be cut once a year, rather than twice, and it was anticipated that the savings would fund the Enhanced Maintenance regime.

- 8.4 During discussion Members suggested that if successful:
- this method could be incorporated into the six District/Borough Council contracts for the rural swathe verge cutting they undertook in their respective urban settlements, on behalf of the County Council;
  - in addition to using this method of verge maintenance on the rural swathe cut on single carriageways, if the local residents supported treating urban verges as wildflower meadows, it could expand to include the verges of high-speed roads in urban areas;
  - other regimes could be considered e.g. not cutting verges, seeding of urban verges with wildflower seeds, planting appropriately sized trees and shrubs on verges / central reservations.
- 8.5 Officers clarified that:
- Although it would take at least 3 years for the extant wild flower population of Enhanced Maintenance verges to emerge, this method enabled the natural species specific to a particular verge to emerge and species diversity to increase;
  - For growth of wildflowers on urban verges where there were none, removal of topsoil to reduce the nutrient levels and reseeded with new wildflowers would be required. These would be introduced species, and so would differ from those encouraged by the Enhanced Maintenance method trial on the rural swathe.
  - Removal of the cuttings on Enhanced Maintenance verges reduced the amount of nutrients re-entering the soil; the resultant nutrient poorer soil favoured wild flower species and encouraged species-rich vegetation, which stemmed the growth of more vigorous plants.
- 8.6 Following Member challenge at undertaking the single cut of Enhanced Maintenance verges between mid-July and mid-August, officers confirmed that to ensure the cut was optimally timed to encourage wildflower species, they would be guided by the most recent information in Plantlife's *The Good Verge Guide*; the current edition had been published after the report under consideration had been published. M Jarrett
- 8.7 The Panel welcomed the fact that, in view of the disruption caused by the need to close highspeed roads for grass cutting and litter picking, which was compounded by the lack of coordination between the contractors concerned, the chairman had suggested to officers that under the new contract the responsibility for both should lie with only one contractor.
- 8.8 Members challenged the practice of cutting between the barriers on central reservations and suggested that, if there was only limited public reaction to the appearance of the Enhanced Maintenance verges, to speed up biodiversity increase before the end of the 3 year trial, consideration should be given to ceasing this type of cutting where it was not required for road safety. Officers agreed that public reaction would be assessed after the first cut of the Enhanced Maintenance verges, but cautioned that the speed of resolution of the operational challenge of C Jacques  
M Jarrett

collection and disposal of the grass cuttings, including collection and separation of litter on these verges, would govern the speed of roll out to other sites.

- 8.9 In view of Members' interest in speeding up biodiversity increase, a Member proposed, and the panel unanimously agreed the following additional recommendation:  
*That a further report on the effects of the trial be brought back to the Panel in autumn 2020.*
- 8.10 The Panel heard that a press release was planned to publicly communicate the reason for the unkempt appearance of the Enhanced Maintenance verges. Local Members of affected divisions would also be consulted with.
- 8.11 During discussion of the County Council's continued use of glyphosate-based weed killers, the chairman clarified that expert advice had been received from Rothamsted Research. The Panel welcome the advice Rothamsted Research had provided by email: in summary, that compared to alternatives, glyphosate had a benign environmental profile. Further to this, a very large number of rigorous and independent studies had failed to corroborate UN research findings that there was a probability it was carcinogenic. To reduce the likelihood of resistance to it developing, its use should be restricted to species which were now resistant to most other available herbicides.
- 8.12 The Panel heard that assurance had been received from the Council's contractors that they used glyphosate based weed killers very sparingly to target noxious invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed, by stem injection or by hand application; in exceptional circumstances, it was hand sprayed on common weeds e.g. those causing visibility issues on highspeed roads; they would switch to another product when one become available.
- 8.13 The chairman advised that he would seek legal advice on publishing the email containing Rothamsted Research's advice on the Council's website. P Bibby

**Conclusions:**

- 8.14 The Panel:
1. Considered the proposal to implement an alternative verge maintenance approach during the 2020 maintenance season;
  2. Considered the motion set out in paragraph 1.2 & 4.2 in light of paragraph 4.1 and the proposition of an alternative verge maintenance approach, with a view to maintenance of highway in ways that improve bio-diversity;
  3. Recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet agree the alternative verge maintenance approach during the 2020 maintenance season;

4. Requested that a further report on the effects of the trial be brought back to the Panel in Autumn 2020.

C Jacques  
M Jarrett

## 9. LED STREET LIGHTING ILLUMINATION STRATEGY

[Officer Contact: Peter Simpson, Senior Asset Manager & Team Leader  
(Operations) (Tel: 01992 658170)]

- 9.1 Members received a report which (i) provided an update on progress on conversion of street light lanterns to Light Emitting Diode (LED) and the Central Management System (CMS), and (ii) sought Panel's recommendation for Cabinet to agree the proposed amendment to the LED Street Lighting Illumination Strategy (dimming and trimming).
- 9.2 The Panel learned that Phase 4 of the LED & CMS lighting project was on programme for completion by the end of March 2020; to date, 104,000 lanterns out of 116,000 had been converted. Members were reminded that the current Part Night Lighting (PNL) regime comprised switch on at full power at dusk, 50% dimming between 21.00 and 23.00, further dimming by 30% from 23.00 to 01.00, and no worse lighting to be provided by the LED lantern than provided by the existing conventional lantern from 05.00 to dawn. Further to this, removal of the LED shields and, or adjustment of the angle of tilt of the lanterns to be addressed as appropriate, upon request from Members and the public via their Local Member.
- 9.3 The Panel were advised that following continued officer monitoring and review the following revision to the existing PNL regime was being proposed: extension of PNL hours from 01.00 to 02.00 (i.e. off at 02.00 and back on at 05.00), with the LED lanterns operating at 20% of full output (i.e. no worse than before level) on a cost neutral basis (i.e. dimming by 30% between 05.00 and 06.00) or producing savings (i.e. dimming by 50% between 05.00 and 06.00), extension of the hours to occur only where there was a local justification at street, route, area level.
- 9.4 Following up on the panel's concern that the second recommendation to the report did not allow for Panel members' input to the criteria to extend the lighting hours for PNL to 01.00 to 02.00 within the PNL regime, a Member suggested that recommendation 1 to the report be amended to: *That Cabinet approves the amendment of the LED street lighting illumination strategy for Part Night Lighting (PNL), to extend the lighting hours from 01.00 to 02.00 and to dim the lighting between 05.00 and 06.00 within the PNL Regime, **except** where there is local justification for **not** doing so for a particular street, route or area with an urban or rural area.* The chairman observed that the criteria were yet to be established and highlighted that the suggested amendment would lead to all the street lights concerned being on between 01.00 to 02.00 under PNL, whereas the intention was that they should only be on where the Local Member

identified a substantial number of people with a local need for the lights to be on at this time, and where this need also met the criteria.

- 9.5 In view of Members' concern that they had no input to / knowledge of the criteria that would be used to determine local justification, the chairman proposed the following amendment to the second recommendation:  
*The Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Environment & Infrastructure, having consulted the Executive Member for Highways & Environment to determine the process and criteria to be applied in determining requests to extend the lighting hours from 01.00 to 02.00 in a particular street, route or area **such process and criteria to be referred back to the Panel in May 2020.***

P Simpson

The Panel agreed the amendment

8 For : 2 Against : 2 Abstentions

(2 Liberal Democrat Group Members voted against the amendment, a Liberal Democrat Member and a Labour Member abstained).

- 9.6 Officers clarified that:
- The CMS enabled all options to be implemented at a street, route or area level;
  - The CMS was automated and detected light failures and power surges, thus negating the need for operatives to scout;
  - LED lights that were inappropriately lit resulted from operator configuration error on the CMS; these were identified by Members / public reporting and ad hoc inspections;
  - LED lights that became inappropriately lit following street scene changes required identification via the faulting report system;
  - Developers had been advised that whilst the project was live, the Council would convert highway lights to LED on developments. However, once the project had come to an end and until the lighting infrastructure was adopted by the Authority, it remained the responsibility of the developer in respect of maintenance etc.;
  - Local Members would be able to change the PNL regime in their division in line with the process and criteria, once per year for example;
  - A residents' petition alone would be insufficient to enable lights to remain lit until 02.00pm; the criteria would also have to be met.

- 9.7 During discussion of the full night lighting levels required for safety reasons at road calming features / junctions, a Member articulated the difficulty inherent in identifying those columns which were off and not operating to this regime in roads where there was no other light by which to see the column concerned.

Members variously highlighted:

- the difficulties which could arise from conflicting local perception of need for PNL on the borders of adjacent electoral divisions;
- that in view of the Climate Emergency, the focus should be on energy

reduction rather than cost neutrality.

- 9.8 During discussion of the PNL regime for A' Class Roads, which comprised 'lights switched on at full power at dusk with dimming by 25% between 23.00 and 06.00', and in support of the Climate Emergency Declaration, a Member proposed the following additional recommendation:

*To undertake immediately or as soon as feasible to dim A Class roads between 05.00-06.00*

Countering this the chairman highlighted that a wider review of dimming for energy savings across the board was being carried out.

The Panel voted against the amendment:

4 For: 7 Against :1 Abstention

(The Liberal Democrat Group and 1 Labour Member voted against the amendment, 1 Labour Member abstained)

### **Conclusions:**

- 9.9 The Panel recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet:
1. Approve the amendment of the LED street lighting illumination strategy for Part Night Lighting (PNL), to extend the lighting hours from 01.00 to 02.00 and to dim the lighting between 05.00 and 06.00 within the PNL Regime, where there is a local justification for doing so for a particular street, route or area within an urban or rural area.
  2. Delegates authority to the Director of Environment & Infrastructure, having consulted the Executive Member for Highways & Environment, to determine the process and criteria to be applied in determining requests to extend the lighting hours from 01.00 to 02.00 in a particular street, route or area, such process and criteria to be referred back to the Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel in May 2020.

## **10. HIGHWAYS & ENVIRONMENT PERFORMANCE MONITOR**

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

- 10.1 The Panel received the Quarter 2 2019/20 (July - Sept 2019) report on the performance of Highways & Environment.
- 10.2 Members noted the 0.20 performance increase in comparison to quarter 1 and that, in response to consideration at previous meetings, Insurance Measures had been removed from Theme 8- Network Safety, to remove the idea of targets, and was now presented as a separate appendix.
- 10.3 During discussion officers clarified that:
- The 'Response to MP Enquires' measure related only to those enquiries received via the MP email address and managed by the

Business Support Team;

- Although developer works under section 278 did not form part of the performance monitor, their programmes and highway works management was tracked. Consideration was being given to monitoring the impact of developer works and how these could be included in future reports.

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|------|---|------------------------|
| 10.4 | As the Q4 data for 2018/19 was missing from 'Road Traffic Casualties Indicators' officers agreed to provide the updated figures in the next Performance report  | S Lockyer<br>S Johnson |
| 10.5 | Since the number of insurance claims had decreased from 2017/18 to 2018/19, yet the total financial cost of insurance claims for 2018/19 exceeded those for 2017/18, officers agreed to provide in the next information report information on the issues surrounding claims, the remedy and network/process related learning that had resulted. | S Lockyer<br>S Johnson |
| 10.6 | Following Member observations on contractor damage to the loop system of traffic lights whilst resurfacing, delays to rectifying this and the seeking of compensation, officers agreed that a performance measure for this could be developed under the Network Management theme, however it would not be ready for the next meeting.           | S Lockyer<br>S Johnson |
| 10.7 | Officers agreed that in future reports the measure 'Change in area-wide kilometrage' would be shown in miles.   | S Lockyer<br>S Johnson |

**11. OTHER PART I BUSINESS**

- 11.1 There was no other business.

**QUENTIN BAKER**  
**CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER**

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**CHAIRMAN**\_\_\_\_\_

**CHAIRMAN'S**  
**INITIALS**

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