

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Thursday, 6 June 2019.

PRESENT

Mr. A. E. Pearson CC (in the Chair)

Mr. D. C. Bill MBE CC  
Mr. G. A. Boulter CC  
Dr. P. Bremner CC  
Mr. D. Harrison CC

Mr. Max Hunt CC  
Mr. D. Jennings CC  
Mr. J. Morgan CC  
Mr J. Poland CC

In attendance.

Mr. B. Pain CC, Cabinet Lead Member for Environment and Transport.

Mrs. C. Radford CC, Cabinet Support Member for Environment and Transport.

1. Appointment of Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Mr. A. Pearson CC as Chairman of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2020 be noted.

Mr A. E. Pearson CC – in the Chair

2. Election of Deputy Chairman.

RESOLVED:

That Dr. P. Bremner CC be elected Deputy Chairman of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the period ending with the Annual Meeting of the County Council in 2020.

3. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

4. Question Time.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 35.

5. Questions asked by members.

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Standing Order 7(3) and 7(5).

6. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

7. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

It was noted that Mr Jennings CC and Mr Harrison CC were members of the Development Control Regulatory Board and had taken part in the decision to grant planning permission for the North and East section of the Melton Mowbray Distributor Road (Agenda Item 13 refers)

8. Declarations of the Party Whip.

There were no declarations of the party whip.

9. Presentation of Petitions under Standing Order 36.

The Chief Executive reported that the following petitions had been received under Standing Order 36:

Petition: Save the 159 Bus and stop cuts to the 153 Bus

The Committee considered a briefing note by the Director of Environment and Transport in response to a petition presented by Mr Crooks, signed by 1303 local residents. A copy of the briefing note is filed with these minutes.

The terms of the petition were:

“We the undersigned call for the 159 Bus Service to be kept it’s a vital service for residents living in many Leicestershire towns and villages and we call for cuts to the 153 service to be dropped.”

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) No decision had been made regarding the future of the 159 bus service. The contract had been extended to allow for the community engagement process, which would take place between July and November 2019, to be concluded, following that a decision would be made.
- ii) The Arriva 153 was a fully commercial service and any decisions on its operation was a matter for Arriva as a private operator, not the County Council.
- iii) The County Council were aware that Hinckley and Bosworth District Council had passed a motion regarding the 159 bus service. The County Council would continue to engage with the District Council and would assist any third parties who wished to fund the provision of a service over and above what the County Council were able to offer.

RESOLVED:-

That the content of the petition and the response tabled be noted.

Petition: Pedestrian Crossing outside the Primary School on Dragon Lane, Newbold Verdon.

Mr Crooks, Local Member, presented a petition signed by 710 local residents. The terms of the petition were:

“We the undersigned Petition Leicestershire County Council to install a Pedestrian Crossing outside the Primary School on Dragon Lane, Newbold Verdon.”

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:

- i) The area had its last PV<sup>2</sup> (the national tried and tested procedure to determine the degree of conflict of vehicle numbers versus pedestrians crossing) in February 2018.
- ii) The County Council were actively trying to recruit a new School Crossing Patrol, but across the County it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit to such roles. Members were asked to promote these roles within their communities.
- iii) Officers were invited on a walking tour to view the area and were asked to reconsider their current position in light of the considerable investment planned to improve play facilities in the nearby park.

RESOLVED:

That the petition be received and that the Director of Environment and Transport carry out the relevant investigation to present a report at the next meeting of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10. Response to Petition: Request for the Speed Reduction of the B581 Station Road

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport in response to the petition containing 1457 signatures which had been received on 11 March 2019. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

The terms of the petition were:

“We the undersigned are concerned residents who urge Leicestershire County Council to reduce the speed limit of the B581 in Elmsthorpe to 30mph and reduce the national speed limit section of the road to a Minimum of 30mph or a Maximum 40mph.”

Mr Taylor, the Lead Petitioner, presented the Petition to the Committee and offered to pay towards the cost of the speed limit reduction and continued community speed awareness. The Council response was that it was unable to support lowering the speed limit given the nature of the road environment in this area and evidence that setting lower speeds than appropriate for a road environment often resulted in higher speeds overall.

Members also noted written comments received from Mrs M. Wright CC and Mrs Richards CC, copies of which are filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) The Coroner's inquest had been delayed until September. The County Council was unable to comment on individual circumstances but would revisit if recommended by the Coroner.
- ii) The Council were modelling 35 areas where accident levels were above the national average. The Council had limited resource and needed to focus expenditure on the highest risk areas.
- iii) Generally the area around the B581 was found to have good compliance with speed limits and followed the Department for Transport guidance that the environment should be 'self-enforcing'.

Members extended their condolences to the family and friends who had been affected by the fatal accident and thanked Mr Taylor for bringing the petition to the attention of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the response to the petition be noted.

11. Response to Petition: Requesting Action on Road Safety Grounds Covering Roads in Queniborough

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport in response to the petition containing 687 signatures that had been presented on 7 March 2019. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

The terms of the petition were:

"We the undersigned ask the County Council to work with the residents of Queniborough to develop a plan for the village so that children and residents can travel around the village safely and so reduce the need for vehicle journeys. Speeding traffic, heavy Lorries, the lack of pedestrian crossings are all issues in the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and we ask the County Council to join us in addressing these issues and improving the quality of life in our village."

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) The Council could only suggest the introduction of a crossing where it was deemed safe. While a crossing at the location would be used during school drop off and pick up times, the lack of use at other times of the day meant there was a danger that drivers would become accustomed to not stopping. National guidance suggests that in such circumstances it would be safer to have no crossing hence the Council could not support a third party funded crossing in this instance.
- ii) Historically Queniborough had severe issues with traffic, but extensive calming measures over time had vastly improved the situation. The County Council felt any further measures must be justified. While the County Council did not have the resource to support the Parish Council, it hoped the information now provided would be of use. If needed the County Council could also suggest a third party consultant that the Parish could fund to have a further look at the area.

- iii) The tariff prices for third party funding projects would be circulated to Members and Parishes. Members were reminded that the prices were not a one size fit all approach and were dependent on environmental factors.

Mr Poland CC expressed his disappointment in the report as he and the large number of people who had signed the petition were extremely concerned about speeding traffic.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12. A5 - Watling Street Bridge Strikes, Hinckley

The Committee considered a report of the Director and Environment and Transport and a presentation from representatives of Highways England and Network Rail regarding bridge strikes at the A5 Watling Street rail bridge near Hinckley. A copy of the presentation and supporting papers, marked 'Agenda Item 12' are filed with these minutes.

The Committee welcomed Mark Woodward from Network Rail, Malcolm Dangerfield from Highways England and Graham Crompton from Leicestershire Police to the meeting for the item.

Arising from the presentation the following points were noted:

- i) Responsibility for the bridge was joint between Highways England and Network Rail. However any bridge strikes had an impact on the County and the surrounding area due to the road closure and diversion route that had to be put in place.
- ii) Network Rail were responsible for paying compensation to train providers who experienced delays due to closure of the track. No compensation was available for any impact on drivers or effects to surrounding business and area.
- iii) There was no observable pattern with bridge strikes with regard to country of origin or vehicle type.
- iv) The signage on approach to the bridge was clear and frequent. Signs set out both metric and imperial measures. The suggestion for a turnaround facility on either side of the bridge had also been looked at. All of these would still be reliant on drivers knowing the height of their vehicle. Network Rail continued to lobby MPs, Haulage Companies and Insurance Companies regarding awareness about vehicle height and low bridges.
- v) Options for raising the bridge or lowering the road had been considered but the costs were prohibitive.

The County Council would continue to engage with Network Rail and Highways England regarding the Bridge and anything further that could be done to deter bridge strikes.

Members thanked officers for such a thorough presentation and report on the subject.

RESOLVED:

That the report and presentation be noted.

13. North and East Melton Mowbray Distributor Road - Planning Application

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport updating them on planning approval of the North and East Melton Mowbray Distributor Road and issues surrounding the risk sharing agreement with Melton Borough Council and developer contributions. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:

- i) The planning application for the North and East Melton Mowbray Distributor Road had been approved, subject to conditions, by the Development Control and Regulatory Board on 23 May 2019.
- ii) Leicestershire County Council were forward funding £14million of the £63.5million expected scheme costs, £49.5million would be covered by an award from the Department for Transport from the Large Local Majors Fund subject to submission of the Full Business Case and approval by the DfT, expected spring 2020. By forward funding the scheme the County Council would be able to deliver the road with significant savings while also significantly accelerating the delivery of the road.
- iii) Concern was raised over the possibility that the Council would not recoup the forward funded element of the scheme due to a number of issues such as potential viability challenges or failure of developments to come forward.
- iv) Members were reassured that section 106 monies were already being collected towards the road and that the Council had secured over £7million of S106 money already. In addition upfront provision of infrastructure would reduce the risk of development not coming forward. Whilst recognising the risk, the Council was reasonably confident that the remaining S106 money would be secured. Any remaining risk would be mitigated through a risk sharing agreement with Melton Borough Council.

RESOLVED:

That the comments of the Committee be forwarded onto Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 25 June 2019.

14. Potential Transfer of Part of the Ashby Canal

The Committee considered a report of the Director and Environment and Transport regarding the potential transfer of land associated with a section of the Ashby Canal to the Ashby Canal Association. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 14' are filed with these minutes.

Mr Sheahan, Local Member for Forest and Measham made representations to the Committee. He was supportive of the proposals but requested that the County Council review its membership on the Ashby Canal Trust to include member representation.

Mr Harrison, Local Member for Ibstock and Appleby welcomed the innovative approach proposed by the Council and hoped that it would bring a boost to the area with the opportunities it would create for leisure, walking and cycle paths.

Members were reassured that the County Council would continue to support the Ashby Canal Trust.

RESOLVED:

That the comments of the Committee be included in the Ashby Canal Consultation that would close on 20 June 2019.

#### 15. Clean Air Strategy 2019

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Environment and Transport which provided an overview of the Government's Clean Air Strategy 2019 and the possible implications for Leicestershire County Council. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 15' is filed with these minutes.

The Committee welcomed Rob Howard, Public Health Consultant to the meeting for the item.

The Chairman brought members attention to the comments tabled by Dr Feltham CC a copy of which is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:

- i) The report provided a snapshot of Government's approach. While the Council was keen to go further in its actions to tackle air quality, they needed to be guided by Government. For example, currently there was no power for the County Council to comment on the air quality impact of development proposals and could only advise refusal of a planning application where the highway impact of development was considered to be severe or an unacceptable safety risk.
- ii) There were 14 Air Quality Management Areas within Leicestershire which were the responsibility of the district councils.
- iii) The County Council were running an event on Clean Air Day on the 20<sup>th</sup> June and were asking officers and members to pledge to do their bit in reducing their carbon footprint.
- iv) Transport was the main cause of NO<sup>2</sup> but Members recognised it was not realistic to assume people would be able to walk or cycle on certain roads, and that the Council needed to be realistic with its approach.
- v) The Leicestershire Air Quality and Health Partnership Action Plan aimed to improve air quality across Leicestershire by reducing or mitigating against the harmful health impacts of air pollutants.

Members were pleased to note that Public Health and the Environment and Transport Department were working together to tackle to issue.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that the Committee be kept updated with further developments and progress made towards Air Quality.

16. Dates of Future Meetings.

RESOLVED:

That Future meetings of the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held at 2.00pm on the following dates:-

- 5 September 2019
- 7 November 2019
- 16 January 2020
- 5 March 2020
- 4 June 2020
- 3 September 2020
- 5 November 2020

CHAIRMAN

2.00pm - 4.50pm June 2019