

MINUTES of the meeting of Environment Scrutiny Committee held at The Council Chamber, Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Friday 26 November 2010 at 9.30 am

Present: Councillor PJ Watts (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: WU Attfield, CM Bartrum, GFM Dawe, JHR Goodwin, TW Hunt, G Lucas, PM Morgan, A Seldon and NL Vaughan

In attendance: Councillors: WLS Bowen, PJ Edwards and DB Wilcox (Cabinet Member - Highways and Transportation)

COUNCILLOR PJ WATTS IN THE CHAIR.

43. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor RI Matthews (Chairman) and Councillor DW Greenow. Apologies were also received from Councillor JG Jarvis, Cabinet Member (Environment & Strategic Housing).

44. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor G Lucas substituted for Councillor DW Greenow.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

8. Railways - update report.
Councillor GFM Dawe, Personal, As Chair of the Rail for Herefordshire Group.

11. Connect 2 Greenway – Scheme Update
Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes (in attendance) declared a personal interest as a member of the Greenway Steering Group.

46. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held 13 September 2010 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47. SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON ISSUES FOR FUTURE SCRUTINY

No suggested areas for scrutiny were received.

48. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The Committee received an update on progress made in preparing the third Local Transport Plan (LTP) and were invited to comment on the emerging strategy.

A number of written questions concerning the LTP3 had been received before the meeting from Mrs E Morawiecka. The questions and the written response have been appended to these minutes.

The Transportation Manager presented his report which set out: the history to the LTP and its importance to the County; the consultation undertaken in developing the emerging strategy; the significant funding pressures in the next few years around highway and transport services.

He also gave a presentation summarising the development of the LTP, current understanding of future funding and the timetable for adopting the strategy. Committee Members had previously received a copy of the draft LTP.

On scrutinising the report the Committee noted the following principal points:

- Data for anticipated traffic growth in the City had been derived from various surveys and this had been modelled using the SATURN (Simulation and Assignment of Traffic to Urban Road Networks) system which in turn had been fed into the Local Development Framework model. Growth indicated in the LDF, and following consultation with the planning section, had been used to assess traffic growth in the rural areas. Statistics on traffic growth in Leominster had been based on work undertaken by a potential developer. The intention was to mitigate national trends/behaviours for increased local journeys.
- Statistics on fuel price/use used government projections within the SATURN system and were used as an industry standard.
- It was agreed that a number of aspirational elements in the LTP, particularly concerning rural roads and road maintenance, would need to be redrafted to provide greater focus. Funding issues will become an important issue especially in view of reduced government funding.
- Questioned whether the funding for the relief road could instead be used to fund improved sustainable transport (bus and cycle/walk ways) the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) responded that the relief road was not a stand alone option. If the County wanted economic growth then a relief road and integrated transport would be needed and this had been endorsed by government ministers. He also pointed out that support to bus services was revenue funding and constructing a relief road would be capital funding.
- With an aging population it was questioned whether the traditional public transport service would be adequate in the long term. Questions were also raised regarding the 20% reduction in bus operator subsidy. The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) responded that the LTP sought to ensure that a reasonable level of service was provided to the rural communities and pointed out that the subsidy reduction was due to government cuts. The Council were discussing the implications with operators. To maintain the current subsidy level would require support from Council resources.
- The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) reported that he would also be discussing the resources situation with community transport operators.
- Comment was made that the LTP lacked any sense of how initiatives would be prioritised. The Assistant Director Highways Transport and Community Services responded that this would be difficult to do in view of the current funding uncertainties.
- Questioned on how improvements to cycleways/footways were anticipated, the Committee noted that in the current financial circumstances resources may need to go to their maintenance, rather than the provision of new routes.
- Questioned how the relief road accorded with the Council's Green Infrastructure Plans as, according to the relief road route diagram in the LTP, it severed a number of green routes to the West of the City. The Committee noted that the diagram in the draft LTP was a conceptual route. Various measures would be taken as part of any major development to protect the green routes.
- Following a public question regarding whether 'smart bus services', park and ride and sustainable measures had been considered instead of the relief road the Assistant Director Highways, Transport and Community Services reported that

improved public transport and other measures were included in the LTP. However, improving public transport in and around the City was dependent on improving traffic movement which would be facilitated by the proposed relief road.

- Questioned about whether statements or evidence contained in various reports undertaken or commissioned in the last few years had been taken into account, e.g. the Natural England report 2010, the Sustainable Communities Director responded that, depending on the report author's stance, some reports could appear contradictory with others, however, all evidence had been taken in to account.

RESOLVED: That where appropriate the comments made during the course of discussion be used by officers to inform the further drafting of the Local Transport Plan (LTP3).

49. ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE 2009 - 10 (GEM)

The Committee considered information on the Council's performance on environmental issues in 2009/10 in relation to commitments made, in particular in the environmental policy and corporate plan. (Good Environmental Management – GEM)

The Sustainability Officer presented the agenda report and highlighted: the five long term outcomes identified under the Corporate Plan environmental objectives; that the National Indicator set had now been dropped which meant that future reporting formats would have to be revised, and there was merit in expanding the set of measures reported against, and these were further set out in the report. Overall performance for 2009/10, indicated by the 'Year End Report', was good.

During the course of scrutinising the performance report the following principal points were noted:

- A number of issues within the 'Natural and Built Environment' section would be governed by the Local Development Framework once approved.
- The staff travel plan target had been achieved.
- One Council school, which was in the course of being redeveloped, and five private schools did not have school travel plans.
- It was suggested that while the use of recycled paper was commendable, cutting the use of papers would be more beneficial.
- The Sustainable Communities Director reported that a more strategic approach, following the national programme lead by the Carbon Trust, was being taken by the Council and PCT to ensure that carbon and cost savings were being made. The Council has set up a Carbon Board to consider how further initiatives could be progressed.
- Questioned on how the results for objective CM2 (per capita reduction in CO₂) had been derived, it was noted that while these related to national statistics the local definition may need revising.
- Schools are large users of heat and power and Property Services were working with schools to reduce their carbon footprint. However, in many cases the required improvements would involve significant capital investment.
- Concern was expressed that if the County exceeded the household waste 'contract cost trigger', a large fine would be incurred. (objective WM1&2)
- Responding to a suggestion that an extension of the 20mph zones would contribute to safer communities and cut carbon, the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) commented that commentary on 20mph zones was included in the draft Local Transport Plan. A review of all the speed limits in the County was underway.

- Questioned on how achievements for LEQ1 (environmental cleanliness) had been derived the Committee noted that a range of areas were sampled and compared against national indicators.

RESOLVED: That the Environmental Performance 2009-2010 report be noted.

50. RAILWAYS - UPDATE REPORT

Councillor GFM Dawe, declared a personal interest as Chairman of the 'Rail for Herefordshire Group'.

The Committee received an update on planned improvements for rail services and facilities in Herefordshire.

In response to the Committee request in June 2010 when Members criticised the rail operators for overcrowding on the Ludlow-Leominster-Hereford trains and concerns about the lack of access facilities, the Committee were informed by the Transportation Manager that: responsibility for the rail services and facilities in Herefordshire lay with a number of train operating companies and network rail; Arriva Trains Wales were developing measures to address overcrowding problems on the Ludlow-Hereford line, and improved access for users of Hereford and Leominster rail stations had now been programmed with Leominster works due to commence in January 2011. The agenda report summarised other key areas of progress in terms of ongoing and planned improvement to rail facilities and services in the County.

During the course of debate the following principal points were noted:

- Questioned whether the Council were in dialogue with the various rail franchise companies the Committee noted that meetings were held with the companies concerning a range of rail issues, however, being national companies meetings were sometimes difficult to arrange.
- Noting the recent government announcement to make a massive investment in rail infrastructure and questioning whether any improvements would be seen to county rail services, the Transportation Manager commented that the investment would be directed to London, the South East and major rail routes. The County may benefit from the knock on effect to the introduction of new rolling stock.
- While paragraph 13 of the report stated that 'track improvements between Hereford and Ledbury.....are likely to be prohibitively expensive' a Member claimed that it wasn't prohibitively expensive when compared to the total LTP funding.
- It was suggested that being part of a 'Quality Rail Partnership' may give added weight to any lobbying to get improved rail services.

The Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) commented that with only four stations (Hereford, Leominster, Ledbury and Colwall) Herefordshire wasn't seen as a priority by the franchise companies. Therefore this needed to be seen in the wider context and may be raised with the Local Enterprise Partnership. He also commented that he would be meeting with Lord Faulkner and would take the opportunity to put the case for twin-tracking, or at least passing loops, on the Hereford to Ledbury line.

RESOLVED: that the position outlined in the report be noted and the key providers of rail services and facilities in the County be invited to a future meeting to discuss issues of concern.

51. REPORT OF THE REVIEW GROUP ON THE HEREFORDSHIRE TRAVELLERS' POLICY

The Committee considered the findings of the review of the Travellers' Policy and progress made on the actions arising from the Herefordshire Travellers' Policy adopted on 25 November 2008.

The Chairman of the Review, Councillor WLS Bowen, reported that in 2008 the Travellers' Policy had been reviewed and a number of recommendations had been made. In accordance with the Committee's wish a further review had recently been undertaken and, having taken into account new government guidance and progress made against a number of actions previously identified, the Review Group made six further recommendations, set out in the report, for consideration by the Committee for forwarding to the Executive for consideration.

The Member for Bringsty ward, and member of the Review Group, briefly outlined the history to the Open Fields site at Linton, particularly in relation to its possible redevelopment by a developer and urged that progress be made.

It was suggested that in view of future planning applications being made the Planning Committee should be made aware of the Travellers' Policy.

RESOLVED: That

- 1. the conclusions of the Review Group on the Herefordshire Travellers Policy be agreed and forwarded to the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) for consideration;**
- 2. the Committee particularly supports the conclusion that work to secure the redevelopment of the Open Fields, Bromyard, site be progressed without undue delay;**
- 3. the Executive response to the Review be reported to the first available meeting of the Committee after the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) has approved his response;**
- 4. the Cabinet Member (Environment and Strategic Housing) considers involving the Review Group in any further development of the Policy; and**
- 5. that Members of the Planning Committee be reminded of the Travellers Policy when considering planning applications for traveller sites.**

52. COUNCIL VEHICLE FLEET

The Committee considered the results of the vehicle fleet review and details of the proposed approach to management of the vehicle fleet.

The report set out that: interim arrangements had been put in place for fleet management which provided assurance and control over the current fleet; management of the individual leased vehicle fleet across Herefordshire Public Services was expected to be consolidated and would ultimately be delivered from the Shared Services Organisation; arrangements for managing the rest of the fleet was being developed with the Council's fleet management partner, Amey Herefordshire. These arrangements will be put in place over the next 6 months so that the business fleet will be managed centrally early in the next financial year. The new arrangements will prioritise the development and roll out of policies and procedures that will help to reduce carbon emissions (and with them cost) and reduce the risks associated with fleet operation. Centralised fleet asset management will be rolled out commencing in April 2011. Centralising fleet management will allow both the implementation of a more consistent vehicle replacement policy and increased flexibility of asset use.

Questioned whether specific reductions in carbon emissions were planned the Committee noted that in relation to the Council's fleet these would be agreed as part of the management agreement with Amey Herefordshire. In relation to the 'gray fleet' (Councillors and officers private vehicles when used for business) this would be looked at as part of the overall carbon reduction policy.

It was suggested that alternative ways be explored for holding non-public meetings thereby saving travelling e.g. teleconferencing.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and officers further explore the use of teleconferencing to further cut the business mileage.

53. CONNECT 2 GREENWAY - SCHEME UPDATE

Councillor MD Lloyd-Hayes (in attendance) declared a personal interest as a member of the Greenway Steering Group.

The Committee received an update regarding the Connect 2 Greenway scheme prior to submission of a planning application for the scheme.

The Construction Manager presented her agenda report and highlighted that following representations from local residents in the vicinity of the Preferred Route (New Bridge), additional investigations into possible routes utilising Outfall Works Road, the Welsh Water bridge and Network Rail underpass were being undertaken. This work would be sufficiently detailed to inform a decision on whether to submit the planning application for the current preferred route or whether to alter the preferred route and follow the original Welsh Water route.

Both options can still be delivered by spring 2013 which is the requirement of the Sustrans funding for this project. The scheme budget remains at £2.6M.

The Committee noted that in the interest of best value and the long term provision of the scheme the two options were being reviewed. Responding to a question concerning the scheme the Committee noted that the scheme represented phase one of the intention to take the cycle way to Holme Lacy.

RESOLVED: That the Committee noted the current position concerning the Connect 2 Greenway scheme as set out in the report.

54. ENVIRONMENT PERFORMANCE UP TO SEPTEMBER 2010

The Committee considered the current outturns and progress against the actions for key national performance indicator targets as they relate to Environment Scrutiny Committee.

On scrutinising the performance indicated in the report the Committee expressed a degree of concern that NI192 (household waste) was below target, however, it was noted that recycling continued to be promoted.

The Committee further noted that while the Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets had been removed, where a rational existed, the Council would continue to use a number of targets for monitoring purposes.

RESOLVED: that the position set out in the performance report be noted.

55. CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee considered progress of the 2010/11 Environment Capital Programme within the overall context of the Council's Capital Programme.

The Director of Resources representative presented the report and highlighted that the total programme had reduced to £17,998k from the figure of £18,838k previously reported and this together with other variances, were set out in more detail in the report and appendix 1.

Questioned whether the cost of the poll (referred to at Council on 19 November 2010) to seek public opinion on the relief road, as contained in the draft LDF, would be met from the Environment budget the Sustainable Communities Director responded that officers were currently looking into the possibility and feasibility of holding the poll. He anticipated that if it went ahead the cost would be met from corporate budgets.

RESOLVED: That the position set out in the Budget Monitoring report be noted.

56. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

The Committee considered the financial position for the Environment budgets for the six months to 30 September 2010.

The Director of Resources representative presented the report and highlighted that the total environment budget for 2010/11 had increased to £24,921k from the amount previously reported (£24,881k). While this was a net increase she highlighted budget pressures in car parking due to reduced levels of income; public transport due to increased fuel prices, and planning due to the continued use of the document scanning system. Waste disposal was also being closely monitored in relation to the 'contract cost trigger'. Other variances were detailed in the report and appendix.

RESOLVED: That the position set out in the Revenue Budget Monitoring report be noted.

57. COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee noted the work programme.

RESOLVED: That the work programme be noted and it be recommended to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for approval.

Questions for Environment Scrutiny Committee 26.11.10

**From Mrs Morawiecka
And response to questions issued 6 December 2010**

On the LTP 3

Question 1.

The Report to this scrutiny committee says that an earlier consultation took place at the start of this year. Natural England submitted a report dated March 2010 on the Multi Modal study as part of this consultation process. The Natural England report stated

Page 3:-

1. An ODR is forecast to increase the CO2 emissions by 2% & 10%.
3. Between 28-38 junctions in the city centre are forecast to cause considerable delay even with the ODR. By considerable delay, we mean operating at between 85% and 120% of capacity.
5. The ODR has varied impact on NO2, which designates part of Hereford as an Air Quality Management Area.
6. The ODR does not appear to be financially viable... TRL calculated that the ODR would produce journey time saving benefits of around £46.5M over fifteen years; this is small compared with the projected costs of the ODR of £130M, and suggests that, when estimated, the Benefit to Cost Ratio for the scheme is likely to be low.

Page 4 Inadequate Options Testing:-

2. No modelling of the sustainable transport options, detailed in the Place Shaping Paper, was undertaken.
3. The public transport provision modelled for 2026 was identical to that available in 2008.
4. Only one Park and Ride (P&R) option was modelled although the sustainable transport options suggest there should be more than one.
5. A multi-modal study of this nature would be expected to consider several other options, including enhanced public transport provision and alternative road construction requirements, such as:

- Substantial improvements to public transport including increased frequency and an increased service area;
- An additional river crossing without a full ODR;
- Enhanced train services;
- River Taxi;
- More Park and Ride sites;
- Flexible working hours (which would encourage peak spreading);
- Reduction in car parking in the centre of city; and
- Car sharing.

Page 5 “In response to Natural England’s specific questions:

- it has not been shown by the study that the relief road is essential for the scale and distribution of growth planned;
- there are likely to be credible alternative sustainable transport package options that should have been, and could be, considered;
- insufficient information on the phasing of housing development is provided to be able to assess how sustainable infrastructure investment could best be phased;
- without further information on the contribution made to future year traffic movements by each housing development it is not possible to fully assess how to best advance a western ODR route. From the information provided, it is likely, however, that a western route would be difficult to justify.”

Where have the officers involved in preparing the LTP3 communicated the conclusions of this report to councillors and how has it been taken into account in preparing the LTP3?

Response:

The Local Development Framework Task Group, whose membership includes Councillors and members of the Herefordshire Partnership including Mark July of Natural England, were made fully aware of the Natural England report. The report was considered within the Task Group and subsequent modelling work commissioned. The outputs from the subsequent modelling were considered in the preparation of LTP3.

Question 2.

If the Hereford Relief road is considered “not financially viable” (see above point 6) and that “a Western relief road would be difficult to justify” (point 5 above) resulting in a lack of funding for this capital project, how would the non delivery of a new western inner relief road impact on the delivery of the local transport plan, in the medium and long term?

Response:

The LTP has been produced to support the development proposals outlined within the emerging LDF Core Strategy. A relief road is a key enabler for the scale of development proposed within this emerging strategy for Hereford. The non-delivery of a relief road would significantly impact both the delivery of the LDF and consequentially the LTP in the medium and the long term.

Question 3.

The Amey Study of Options (Aug 2010) states “the eastern routes perform best in terms of reducing delay within the City. Many of the overcapacity junctions are on the east side of the city and as such the eastern bypass has the greatest improvement in these areas, resulting in the overall best results”.

The LTP3 states (Page 17) “Whilst the strategic proposals for the city do not support the identification of a fourth site to the east we will keep the need for an additional site serving the east of the city under review during the plan period.”

LTP3 proposes a western inner relief road. This would indicate that the LTP3 is not addressing the transport problems encountered on the majority of junctions operating beyond capacity, which are regularly used by residents on the East and people coming from Worcester and Ledbury to Hereford. Could the officers explain the reasons for this discrimination against the east of Hereford and why these junctions are to be neglected by the transport strategy?

Response:

In terms of transportation and network performance an eastern route performs marginally better than a western route. However, in terms of engineering and environmental impacts a western route is the preferred option.

Question 4.

The LTP3 second strategic goal states “ to prepare for a low-carbon future by supporting sustainable travel and ensuring responsible management plans are developed to maintain Herefordshire’s transport assets”

However, the LTP3 shows the green infrastructure routes separately from the western inner relief road, which disguises the severing affect of the western inner relief road on footpaths, bridleways and the quiet country lanes in Breinton. The Western inner relief road will in fact cut right through the centre of both the old Moorhampton rail line (the new proposed cycleway of the housing

development at Three Elms) and the historic Green Lane bridleway, the route of the Bishops of Hereford to their summer residence and a bridleway interconnecting with many other footpaths and bridleways all in daily use. The poor quality of the green infrastructure plan in the LTP, shown as Figure G, completely omits the City's only tourist cycle route that starts and finishes in the City and utilises the lanes and bridleways around Breinton. It also fails to highlight the only national trail that goes through Hereford – The Wye Valley Walk.

Instead, the LTP3 shows a different "green infrastructure corridor" that would appear to start and finish in the middle of fields and is completely unconnected to any existing public footpaths, bridleways or lanes.

How does the LTP3 plan to maintain these important historic, amenity, health and sustainable routes, whilst at the same time building a large relief road right through the middle of these same assets?

How does the western inner relief road proposal accord with the 2nd strategic goal?

Response:

The detailed planning of any relief road would include specific arrangements for maintaining existing accesses and rights of way. As this work has not been undertaken it is not possible to comment on any specific mitigation works which would be designed to maintain these accesses and rights of way.

Question 5

The first strategic goal of the LTP3 is "to support long-term economic growth within Herefordshire by improving journey time, reliability and predictability on key routes". The Amey Study of Options (Aug 2010) shows that with the provision of an inner western relief road "4.2.10 It can be seen from the total times in table 4.2 that all modelled scenarios perform worse than the 2008 base year". Why then is this council pursuing a growth and transport strategy which will increase journey times when this does not accord with their own strategic goal for transport?

Response:

As stated previously the LTP supports the emerging LDF Core Strategy and as identified within the question all scenarios tested result in increased journey times, including the no-road scenario. The preferred option does, however, enable a significant increase in transport movements and in particular amongst non-motorised forms of transport. Further work would be undertaken as the strategy develops to improve traffic management in the city, making best use of new infrastructure, further encouraging more sustainable modes and seeking to ensure journey time reliability and predictability.

Question 6.

LTP3 states on page 31/32 "The Hereford Relief Road will also help contribute to reducing pollutant concentrates within Hereford city as a lot of the traffic which currently passes through the city centre will bypass Hereford and relieve the city from congestion. The subsequent transfer of ownership of the A49 from the Highways Agency to the council will also allow sustainable transport infrastructure to be installed along the route including bus priority measures and cycle lanes."

Could officers please indicate where and when the Highways agency has agreed to transfer the ownership of the current A49 route to the council, especially as officers confirmed at the meeting at Trinity school on 3.11.10 that the new western inner relief road will actually be a road that passes through the middle of all the new housing and employment sites. Why are the Highways Agency looking to adopt a single carriageway housing estate access road?

In addition, where did officers obtain evidence that the Hereford Relief road will contribute to reducing pollutant concentrates within Hereford City when the Natural England report dated March 2010 shows that

“Page 3:-

1. An ODR is forecast to increase the CO2 emissions by 2% & 10%.
5. The ODR has varied impact on NO2, which designates part of Hereford as an Air Quality Management Area.” ?

Response:

The Highways Agency has not agreed to transfer the ownership of the A49 to the Council. The detailing of the relief road and its suitability as an alternative to the existing A49 for trunk road purposes have been subject of ongoing discussions with the Highways Agency and will be pursued subject to the proposal being adopted by the Council.

The Natural England commissioned report refers to modelling carried out in 2009 (The Hereford Multi Modal Model Forecasting Report) which has been superseded by revised modelling which forms an element of the Relief Road Study of Options. Importantly, the revised modelling includes sustainable transport packages which were not included in the original modelling.

The original modelling predictions for changes in emissions provided global outputs for the entire network and are not attributed to specific locations such as the A49 Air Quality Management Area. The report concluded that the addition of the relief road would reduce emissions associated with congested traffic (such as carbon monoxide) but would increase emissions associated with distance travelled (such as carbon dioxide).

Question 7

As many of the emergency services are located to the east of the city what will be the impact on the ability of emergency vehicles to attend incidents on the west and south of the city, where there is due to be a 30% increase in housing, when some of the roads currently dual carriageways will be reduced to single carriageways; and the overcapacity junctions will not have been improved?

Response:

The emergency services have been fully consulted during the preparation of the emerging LDF and LTP strategies and they will continue to be involved as formal development plans emerge.