

Minutes of the meeting of the Connected Communities Scrutiny Committee held in Conference Room 1, Herefordshire Council Offices, Plough Lane, Hereford, HR4 0LE on Wednesday 8 November 2023 at 10.00 am

Committee members present in person and voting: **Councillors: Ellie Chowns (Chairperson), Frank Cornthwaite, David Hitchiner, Ed O'Driscoll (Vice-Chairperson), Roger Phillips, Ben Proctor and Allan Williams**

Others in attendance: M Averill (Service Director Environment and Highways), B Baugh (Democratic Services Officer), V Hammond (Senior Transport Planning Officer), J McCann (Principal Transport Planner at WSP), W Merriman (Senior Project Manager), J Myatt (Associate Director at PJA), G Pickford (Interim Head of Transportation and Parking), S Pope (Technical Director at WSP), Councillor P Price (Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure), A Rees-Glinos (Governance Support Assistant), R Walters (Consultant at PJA) and D Webb (Statutory Scrutiny Officer)

[Note: [Click here for the link to the agenda and to the video recording of this meeting](#); the links provided were correct at the time of publication of this minutes document]

18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Bruce Baker.

19. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Allan Williams was present as the substitute member for Councillor Bruce Baker.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

21. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were received.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairperson.

22. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No questions had been received from members of the public.

23. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

No questions had been received from councillors.

24. HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure and the Interim Head of Transportation and Parking introduced the item. The committee was advised that the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was a strategic approach to identifying improvements, driven by data and analysis of commuting, leisure, and everyday trips.

The principal points of the discussion are summarised below:

1. A committee member noted that the Technical Guidance for Local Authorities ([link to the Department of Transport \(DfT\) guidance](#)) suggested various data sources, with one being app-based data for existing cycle trips (e.g. Strava). Comments were made about the potential over-reliance on app-based data and the need to mitigate related biases, including the possibility that certain groups of people could be missed, such as serving personnel who may avoid the use of geo-tagging apps. The PJA Consultant provided the committee with an overview of the demand-led approach to identifying desire lines.
2. The Interim Head of Transport and Parking reported that there would be engagement with some stakeholder groups on the LCWIP before broader consultation and engagement aligned to the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the Local Plan. With attention drawn to the LCWIP programme and progress (paragraph 10, agenda page 15), committee members expressed concerns about the lack of engagement to date and commented on the need for key stakeholders, including town and parish councils, to be enabled to input concerns and ideas. The Chairperson considered that consultation on the LCWIP should be on a standalone basis and undertaken as soon as possible.
3. The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure acknowledged the need for effective engagement, including with stakeholders in rural areas, and the challenges associated with the timescales for key strategies and plans.
4. The Interim Head of Transport and Parking reported that Herefordshire Council was working on cross-border linkages with neighbouring local authorities in Monmouthshire, Powys, and Shropshire as part of the Marches Forward Partnership. It was noted that work was outstanding with Gloucestershire. The Chairperson commented on the need to coordinate with all neighbouring authorities.
5. The Vice-Chairperson noted that a key output would be 'a prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment' (paragraph 31 b, agenda page 19) and suggested that this could be considered for future scrutiny activity.
6. The Interim Head of Transport and Parking reported that cycling and walking network mapping had not yet been received; the consultant, Phil Jones Associates (PJA), was auditing possible cycling routes to confirm that they were achievable.
7. In response to a comment about the interfaces between cycle routes and busy roads, the Service Director Environment and Highways provided an outline of the proposed infrastructure improvements on Holme Lacy Road in Hereford.
8. The Interim Head of Transport and Parking advised the committee that the outputs from the LCWIP would help to inform the LTP; evidence would be assessed in relation to different ideas (e.g. a north to south cycle route, utilising disused railway lines, etc), including opportunities to attract investment. The Chairperson commented on the level of local interest in greenways in several locations but expressed concern that this would not be reflected in the data on existing commuting, leisure, and everyday trips.

9. The Vice-Chairperson noted that £60k had been allocated to PJA to develop the LCWIP and a breakdown of the spending was requested. The Senior Project Manager reported that £10k had been committed towards consultation and additional funding of £33k had been received from Active Travel England. Committee members emphasised the importance of pro-active engagement with local groups and communities to explore ideas and challenges (e.g. securing co-operation from multiple landowners). It was acknowledged that the council should be ambitious in scope in the best interests of Herefordshire.
10. The PJA Consultant advised that reference to 'distances of 2km and 10km illustrate the reachable areas by walking and cycling' (paragraph 13 b ii, agenda page 16) related to DfT guidance but the Propensity to Cycle Tool (PCT) and, some of the routes being explored, did take into account the wider use of e-bikes in the future. The committee was also advised that the technical guidance was being updated by the DfT, partly in response to representations made by rural authorities.
11. With attention drawn to the sentence that the Hereford City Masterplan 'contains the LCWIP which extends the city boundary and identifies key links into the rest of the county' (paragraph 4, agenda page 14), the Chairperson requested that clarification be provided about the nature and timing of engagement and consultation on the LCWIP elements of the masterplan.

At the conclusion of the debate, the committee discussed potential recommendations and the following resolution was agreed.

Resolved: That it be recommended to the executive:

1. **That more and better secondary data be used, particularly that data beyond Strava is used for leisure, and that the LCWIP states and mitigates biases in that data.**
2. **That public consultation be done, including but not limited to city, town and parish councils, walking and cycling groups, key local institutions and employers, in line with DfT LCWIP engagement guidance, and**
 - a. **that significant funds be allocated to do this (noting that there is potentially £43k already available for this exercise);**
 - b. **that this is done ASAP and certainly commenced before the end of this calendar year; that such consultation is done on a standalone basis without waiting for LTP and Local plan consultation;**
 - c. **that such consultation acknowledges that in many cases there may be synergies between LCWIP and wider highway maintenance and improvements.**
3. **That consultation is done on the LCWIP elements of the Hereford City Masterplan ASAP.**
4. **That Herefordshire Council coordinates with neighbouring local authorities sooner rather than later both in terms of information gathering and consultation on potential routes.**
5. **That potential long distance routes including greenways are included in the LCWIP consultation and development process.**

6. That the cycle network plan and walking network plan be published to scrutiny ASAP.
7. That a breakdown of the spending with PJA be provided.

[Note: There was a short adjournment before the next item]

25. NEW HEREFORDSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN

The Cabinet Member Transport and Infrastructure and the Interim Head of Transportation and Parking introduced the item. The committee was advised that the Local Transport Plan (LTP) was as a key strategy document to access transport funding for the county, guidance on the preparation of new LTPs was awaited from the Department for Transport (DfT), there were linkages between the new Herefordshire LTP and other strategies and plans, and attention was drawn to factors in the wider context of the plan (paragraph 23, agenda page 26).

The principal points of the discussion are summarised below:

1. The Interim Head of Transportation and Parking reported that the LTP was in the early stages of development, there had been an extensive carbon emissions modelling exercise, and the objectives for the LTP would be considered by Cabinet ([link to the issue details](#)).
2. The Interim Head of Transportation and Parking advised that other data would be used in subsequent stages to develop the long list of potential interventions, alongside consultation, feedback, and prioritisation. Committee members commented on the need for contextual data to help frame discussions about the objectives. The committee was advised that carbon emissions data had not been published with the agenda, as officers considered that supporting narrative was needed from the specialist consultants, WSP. The Chairperson emphasised the need to conduct business in an open and transparent manner, and requested that all background materials be published in full for subsequent meetings.
3. The Vice-Chairperson noted that reducing carbon emissions would form a key part of the LTP and questioned the research being undertaken in the context of the other goals, such as supporting economic growth, promoting equality of opportunity, contributing to better health, safety, and security, and improving quality of life and a healthy natural environment. The Interim Head of Transportation and Parking acknowledged that, as a significant change to previous plans, the report had focussed on carbon emissions but there would be cross-references to other strategies and plans, such as the Big Economic Plan. The Vice-Chairperson commented on the need to explore potential initiatives, such as convenient and reliable public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure, and co-working hubs.
4. The Chairperson drew attention to paragraph 14 (agenda page 25) which stated '... transport in Herefordshire represented around 26% of total emissions', to the council's website which stated 'In Herefordshire, transport accounts for 36% of our emissions' ([link to the website](#)), and to paragraph 24 e) (agenda page 26) which stated '41% of emissions are for trips greater than 50 miles'. The Chairperson expressed concerns about the inconsistency in the way that carbon emissions had been presented, with a mix of territorial and consumption calculations. The WSP Technical Director reported that the quantification of emissions was based on the recommended standard set out in unpublished, draft guidance. The Chairperson emphasised the need to address the inconsistency, particularly given the potential

implications for the prioritisation of effort. The committee discussed the differences in approach and the importance of modal shift for short journeys.

5. A committee member made comments about the need to work in partnership to address issues in rural areas, including National Grid capacity, demand response transport, and railway infrastructure.
6. The Interim Head of Transportation and Parking reported that Midlands Connect was in the early stages of looking at bus franchising. A committee member suggested that a potential item on bus franchising could be added to the work programme long list. The Chairperson drew attention to recent innovations such as the Daffodil Line in Herefordshire and the fflecsi bus service in Wales.
7. A committee member made comments about economic and other factors which may influence journey patterns made by individuals within households, including employment opportunities and education provision.
8. In response to a question about the consideration of transport carbon emissions in relation to river crossing options, the Interim Head of Transportation and Parking advised that the LTP would look at the carbon effects, impacts and mitigations associated with major highway infrastructure. It was reported that the next stage of work on the LTP would involve looking at types of interventions.
9. The Interim Head of Transportation and Parking reported that there was close working between the LTP and the Local Plan teams to respond to potential changes to land use or provision, and the LTP would be reviewed regularly.
10. Clarifications were provided about the 'analysis of 17 other authorities' LTPs' and the meaning of 'streets for people philosophy, and modal hierarchy' (paragraph 33 d, agenda page 27).
11. The Interim Head of Transportation and Parking advised that the alignment of consultation processes should mitigate the risk 'It is likely that public and stakeholder consultation for the LTP will overlap with that of the Local Plan and other transportation projects, running the risk of confusion or consultation fatigue for partners, stakeholders and the public.' (paragraph 50, agenda page 30).
12. The Chairperson expressed concerns about the lack of clarity about the consultation process and considered it surprising that there had not been engagement with key stakeholders to date, such as the Transport subgroup of the Herefordshire Climate and Nature Partnership Board (HCNPB). Another committee member commented that opportunities may have been missed to gather different sources of data.
13. The Chairperson emphasised the need for strategies and plans to be rooted in the lived experiences of people in Herefordshire and the views of stakeholders. With attention drawn to the six broad themes that emerged from analysis of other LTPs (paragraph 36, agenda page 28), the Chairperson commented on the need to articulate support for a shift to active travel modes. It was suggested that the objectives could be ordered in terms of people, environment, and economy.
14. The Vice-Chairperson considered that the development of the LTP should be embraced as an opportunity, not just to unlock access to funding, and that further research and consultation was needed to reflect the needs of the county.

At the conclusion of the debate, the committee discussed potential recommendations and the following resolution was agreed.

Resolved: That it be recommended to the executive:

- 1. Publish in full all background materials, including but not limited to the carbon modelling exercise.**
- 2. Address the inconsistency in the way that carbon emissions are presented (by mixing territorial and consumption); publish both consumption and territorial emissions for both overall emissions and journey length (if possible); and address the issue that this report underplays the importance of modal shift for short journeys.**
- 3. Engage immediately and closely with the Transport subgroup of the HCNPB as well as other key stakeholders, including National Grid.**
- 4. Engage ASAP with a wide range of stakeholders to collect data as well as consult on emerging priorities.**
- 5. Consider the following suggested objectives:**
 - a. Improved road safety**
 - b. Improved residents health**
 - c. Improved range of transport choices including active travel and public transport, demand-responsive transport and reliable public EV charging infrastructure**
 - d. Improved access to services**
 - e. Carbon reduction (embodied and operational)**
 - f. Nature protection**
 - g. Supporting a sustainably thriving and prosperous economy.**

26. WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year 2023/24:

- A councillor had suggested 'Public Rights of Way' as a topic for potential scrutiny activity.
- A committee member suggested that 'Bus Franchising' be added to the long list.
- A committee member suggested that the item on 'Herefordshire County Business Improvement District' should instead focus on 'Hereford Enterprise Zone'.
- The agenda items for January 2024* (Planning – Delivery of Section 106-Funded Projects) and March 2024 (Skills and Apprenticeships) were agreed; for the latter, the Statutory Scrutiny Officer noted that matters relating to care leavers could be reported into the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved: That the work programme for January 2024* and March 2024 be agreed.

27. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting was identified as Wednesday 10 January 2024.*

[*Note: The next meeting was rescheduled from Wednesday 10 January 2024 to Tuesday 27 February 2024, 2.00 pm]

The meeting ended at 1.00 pm

Chairperson