

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Highways and Transport Committee**
held on Thursday, 20th July, 2023 in the The Capesthorpe Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor C Browne (Chair)
Councillor L Crane (Vice-Chair)

Councillors L Braithwaite, R Chadwick, A Coiley, H Faddes, A Gage,
C Hilliard, R Moreton, J Snowball, H Moss and M Sewart

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Tom Moody, Director of Highways and Infrastructure
Richard Hibbert, Head of Strategic Transport and Parking
Hayley Kirkham, HS2 Programme Director
Paul Davies, Contract Operations Manager
Dom Proud, Contract Director
Steve Reading, Principal Accountant
Adrian Leslie, Solicitor – Legal Services
Genni Butler, Acting Public Rights of Way Manager
Nikki Bishop, Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Priest (Councillor Judy Snowball was present as substitute) and Peter Coan.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 22 June 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Councillor Michael Unett, Alsager Town Councillor, addressed the Committee in relation to items 8 (Parking Review - MTFs Initiatives 2023-24) and 10 (Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy). Councillor Unett welcomed the proposed Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy and highlighted that Alsager had a number of points across the town that had been earmarked for electric charging installation for a number of years.

Councillor Unett requested that, in relation to item 8 (Parking Review – MTFS Initiatives 2023-24), any proposals formed following public consultation were presented to the Highways and Transport Committee for consideration/approval prior to implementation.

5 HIGHWAYS AND INFRASTRUCTURE: 2022/23 ANNUAL REVIEW

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on performance across the Infrastructure and Highways Service during 2022-23.

Committee Members noted the large-scale highways network across the borough which included 2,162km of footways, 1,047 bridges and structures, over 40,000 streetlights and 5.8million m² of grass verge. The Committee thanked officers across the service for their hard work and efforts throughout 2022-23.

The Committee also thanked Hayley Kirkham, Paul Griffiths and their teams for their work in preparing the Council's Petition against HS2 Phase 2b and for the support they had provided to Town and Parish Councils in order to help them achieve their aspirations through the petitioning process.

It was noted that there had been a decrease in the investment for category 1 defects during 2022-23 compared to 2021-22 and that this was expected following the proactive approach in maintenance and Level 2 patching works undertaken. It was highlighted that an additional £19m of capital investment, over four years, had been identified for the highways network. Members queried how many extra kilometres of Level 2 works the additional capital investment had been able to fund during 2022-23.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Highways and Transport Committee

1. Note the performance of the Infrastructure and Highways Services during 2022/23.
2. Note the on-going work of the Highways Service to support delivery of the Council's Brighter Futures Customer Strategy.

6 LEAD LOCAL FLOOD AUTHORITY: 2022/23 ANNUAL REVIEW

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on activity in relation to the Council's role as Lead Local Flood Authority during 2022-23.

It was requested that consideration was given to funding for flood risk management and suggested that an accrual of monies for flood risk be identified outside of the highways and infrastructure budget which Members felt was already under significant pressure. It was confirmed that in response to flooding incidents there was a redistribution of funding across the service. The service received an income from fees for use of the highway and that any surplus would be put aside to form a small reserve for flooding to provide some flexibility to manage pressures and reduce the impact this had on pothole repair funding.

Cllr Sewart referred to serious flooding incidents in Poynton in 2016 and 2019 and thanked the team for the excellent work that they did following both incidents.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

The Highways and Transport Committee

1. Note the update on activity in relation to the Council's role as Lead Local Flood Authority undertaken in 2022/23.
2. Agree that the Committee will monitor the activity of the Council in discharging its duties as Lead Local Flood Authority in 2023/24 and receive an annual report.

7 STREET LIGHTING ENERGY SAVINGS: CONSULTATION PROPOSALS AND OPTIONS UPDATE

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on progress against the MTFs revenue saving proposals PL23-27 (energy saving measures from streetlight). It was reported that the Council provided over 40,000 streetlights across the Borough and the proposals set out within the report sought to reduce energy consumption by reducing the number and timing of streetlighting either by turning streetlights off completely or in part, commencing Winter 2023.

The Committee noted the difficult financial challenges facing the Council and that energy prices would continue to rise during 2023-24. It was confirmed that the Council's price per unit of electricity would increase by 11% to £0.294 per kWh adding a further £137,000 pressure to the existing street lighting energy budget in 2023-24. The Committee agreed that taking no action was not an option.

The Committee were supportive of the flexibility of the Central Management System (CMS) and its ability to give control over the exact switch on/off times of individual streetlights and the ability to turn streetlights back on in high-risk areas or in the event of an emergency. The Committee requested that a review of any proposal subsequently implemented following Committee approval is brought back to the Committee to reflect on how this had worked over a 12-month period. Members queried the costs of CMS implementation. Officers committed to keeping the Committee informed of the implementation costs, following a market feasibility study.

Committee Members were supportive of streetlighting energy savings proposals being put out to public consultation in September/October 2023 on the basis that the feedback from consultation informed the final proposals that would be considered by the Committee prior to any change being implemented. It was confirmed that consultation would also involve statutory partners including the Police.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Highways and Transport Committee

1. Note progress to date in relation to energy savings measures from streetlights.

2. Agree a delegation of authority to the Director of Highways and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, to finalise the initiatives and take all steps to complete public consultation on the energy saving options as set out in Table 1 of the committee report.
3. Note that the outcomes of consultation will be reported to Committee in January 2024 together with recommendations on an implementation plan.

8 PARKING REVIEW - MTFS INITIATIVES 2023-24

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on progress towards delivery of the Parking Review included in the adopted Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Committee noted that Cheshire East Council had not increased parking charges since 2018, where tariffs were increased by 10pence and that there was significant difference in the location of charged and free car parking across the Borough as a result of legacy arrangements inherited by the Council.

There was agreement amongst most Committee Members that harmonisation of tariffs was needed to ensure a fairer system across Cheshire East. Committee Members were pleased to learn that there had been clear consideration given to mitigations where charges could be introduced to existing free car parks and that the proposed demand responsive pilot scheme could result in reduced charging at certain times of the day. The Committee requested that the feedback from public consultation was shared and that the final proposals due to be considered by the Committee in January 2024 reflect the feedback received during the consultation process. It was also requested that consideration was given to introducing a period of free parking across all towns.

It was noted that the costs of running the parking service were considerably higher compared to neighbouring authorities. It was requested that a detailed breakdown of the service running costs were provided to the Committee at a future meeting.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Highways and Transport Committee

1. Note the scope of the parking initiatives and the contribution of these to delivering the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy, as adopted at council on 22 February 2023.
2. Agree a delegation of authority to the Director of Highways and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Chair of Highways & Transport Committee, to finalise proposals relating to these initiatives and take all steps to complete public and statutory consultation.
3. Agree that Committee receive further briefings on these proposals in advance of public consultation, in accordance with the Consultation and Engagement Plan (Appendix 1) and that the work programme be updated accordingly.

4. Note that the outcomes of consultation will be reported to committee in January 2024, with recommendations on an implementation plan

9 FLEXILINK DEMAND-RESPONSIVE TRANSPORT SERVICE

The Committee considered the report which sought approval to launch public consultation on modernisation of the FlexiLink Demand Responsive Transport Service. It was noted that FlexiLink was a demand responsive bus service which operated across the borough and was funded by the Council as part of the supported bus network.

The Committee welcomed the report and praised the service and officers involved. The Committee acknowledged that the existing service had grown to become vital to users, particularly those in rural communities. Members supported the proposal to launch a public consultation on a series of options to improve the service seeking views from existing service users, residents and stakeholders.

It was requested that consideration be given to working with business improvement districts, town councils and business groups to create targeted and specific offerings to drive demand on specific days. It was agreed this would be considered as part of the consultation process.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Highways and Transport Committee

1. Note the review of the Council's FlexiLink bus service.
2. Approve the proposal to launch a public consultation to seek the views of service users, residents and stakeholders.
3. Approve the Consultation & Engagement Plan.
4. Delegate approval of the consultation material for publication to the Director of Infrastructure and Highways who will make all necessary arrangements to undertake public consultation.

10 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on work to develop a robust evidence based and strategic approach to the provision of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points across the Borough. The report sought approval of the Council's updated EV Charging Strategy.

Cllr Hilliard requested that consideration was given to the uptake of active travel and micro mobility across the borough and not just the uptake of electric cars and vans as this was important for driving forward town centre travel and vitality. Officers confirmed that there

would be engagement with infrastructure providers to identify potential options.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Highways and Transport Committee

1. Approve the EV Strategy (Appendix 1) which will become part of the Council's adopted transport policy framework.
2. Approve development of a funding bid to the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund in line with the EV Strategy and authorise the Director of Infrastructure and Highways to submit the bid, accept the funding grant when offered.
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure and Highways to spend the money when received and make all necessary arrangements to:
 - a. Launch procurement activities for a strategic EV infrastructure investment and delivery partner/s for programmes such as the On-street Residential Charge points Scheme (ORCS) and the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Fund (LEVI).
 - b. Award contract/s to invest in, deliver, operate, and maintain publicly available charge points.
 - c. Call off the contract/s for future phases of charge point delivery.
 - d. Implement the measures contained within the strategy through joint working with a range of partners.
4. Note that Committee will receive reports as part of the forward work programme to provide updates on the delivery of these programmes.

11 FINAL OUTTURN 2022-23

The Committee received the report which provided an overview of the Cheshire East Council provisional outturn for the financial year 2022/23 and the financial performance of the Council relevant to the Highways and Transport Committee remit.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Highways and Transport Committee

- 1) Note the report of the Corporate Policy Committee Consider the financial performance of the Council in the 2022/23 financial year relevant to their terms of reference.
- 2) Note the delegated decisions relating to supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Section 2 of each Committee Appendix (Annex 2).
- 3) Note the update on performance with regard to the MTFS 2023-27 approved budget policy change items, in respect of Services within the remit of the Committee (Annex 3).

12 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Committee received the Public Rights of Way Sub Committee Annual Report 2022-23. The Committee noted the work for the Public Rights of Way Sub Committee as set out within the report.

Members queried what training would be required for the Committee following the decision made at Full Council on 19 July 2023 to incorporate the functions of the Public Rights of Way Sub Committee into the Highways and Transport Committee. It was confirmed that Democratic Services would arrange training and communicate full details with Committee Members in the near future.

Members noted the hard work of the Public Rights of Way team in difficult circumstances in keeping the network maintained.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Highways and Transport Committee

1. Note the Public Rights of Way Sub Committee Annual Report 2022-23.

13 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme and noted that:

1. Externally Funded Transport Schemes – Phase 1 had been added to the Work Programme for consideration in September 2023.
2. As a result of the resolution relating to item 8 (Parking Initiatives – MTFS Initiatives 2023-24) the item 'Parking Review Consultation Plan' scheduled for September 2023 Committee would no longer be required and would be removed from the Committee Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.44 am

Councillor C Browne (Chair)