

Environment, Development and Transport Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Friday, 20 October 2017
at 10am in the Cranworth Room, County Hall**

Present:

Mr M Wilby - Chair	
Mr S Clancy (Vice-Chairman)	Mr T Jermy
Mr P Duigan	Mr C Jones
Mr T East	Ms J Oliver
Mr S Eyre	Mr M Sands
Mr C Foulger	Mr T Smith
Mr A Grant	Mr A White

1. Apologies and Substitutions

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mr M Castle (Mr M Sands substituting).

2. Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2017 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Members to Declare any Interests

- 3.1 No interests were declared

4. Urgent Business

- 4.1 The Chairman informed Members that funding had been granted by the Department for Transport for a roundabout at Hempnall crossroads and the Suffolk A140 crossroads.

5. Public Questions

- 5.1 Four public questions were received and the answers circulated; see appendix A. Three supplementary questions were asked:
- 5.2.1 Ms Parkhouse was concerned about the overspend related to the NDR (Norwich Distributor Road) and that the public were asked to leave Environment, Development and Transport Committee meetings during discussion of finance and funding. She referred to the Leader's live Facebook interview with the Eastern Daily Press in which he referred to possible additional costs related to the NDR. She asked whether the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, would be censuring the Leader for putting out fake news on social media.

- 5.2.2 The Chairman responded on behalf of the Committee that the NDR overspend and cost was still commercially sensitive whilst negotiations were ongoing, as agreed at the last and previous meetings of Environment, Development and Transport Committee. Everybody, including the Leader, was entitled to an opinion.
- 5.3.1 Cllr Carlo asked the committee whether they would consider not to commit half a million pounds from pooled business rates to the Western Link Road but instead to bus services for vulnerable people.
- 5.3.2 The Chairman responded that this was a decision for the Committee to make which would be made later on in the meeting.
- 5.4.1 Mr Cawdron asked whether the affected parishes were aware that WSP consultants' and Norfolk County Council's report on future growth assumed a Norwich western quadrant with food enterprise zones, a thousand more homes at Costessey and housing developments elsewhere in Norfolk and that this was carried out before consultation.
- 5.4.2 The Chairman replied that this information would come out in future consultations.

6. Member Questions

- 6.1 Two member questions were received and the answers circulated; see appendix B.

7. Verbal update/feedback from Members of the Committee regarding Member Working Groups or bodies that they sit on.

- 7.1 An update from the Norwich Distributor Road working group was circulated; see appendix C. Mr East suggested that paragraphs 5 and 6 may allay some of the fears raised in public questions.

8. Annual reviewed of the Enforcement Policy

- 8.1 The Committee received the report outlining the Enforcement Policy and associated documents for agreement, subject to agreement by the Communities Committee.
- 8.2.1 Mr East raised the issue of A-Board Trailers advertising events on the highways which was not covered by the 2003 highway trading protocol; discussion was held about this. Mr East **suggested** district councils could use licencing Committees to condition events regarding how they advertise on the highway. The Chairman noted that councillors could play a role in removal of unwanted trailers.
- 8.2.2 The Assistant Director of Highways noted this was a modern issue, noting the age of the protocol; he **agreed** to look into whether licencing conditions could be used to control how events advertised on the highway.
- 8.3 The Committee:
- **CONFIRMED** the revised CES (Community and Environmental Services) Enforcement Policy (Appendix 1 of the report) and its annex documents met the requirements of Environment, Development and Transport services, prior to consideration by Communities Committee (the approval body for the Policy).

9. Strategic and Financial Planning 2018-19 to 2021-22

- 9.1 The Committee received the report providing an update on the Committee's detailed planning to feed into the Council's budget process for 2018-19.
- 9.2.1 The Chairman **proposed** a Change to table 4 (page 85), to remove the line "Stop filling/re-filling grit bins for free", and move the associated £100,000 saving to "Reducing spend on non-safety critical highway maintenance". This would increase the saving associated with this action from £200,000 to £300,000. This proposed amendment would be taken for agreement under recommendation 4 b).
- 9.2.2 Feedback was given from the Barnham Action Group who were unhappy about the impact on vulnerable residents' feeling of safety in icy weather by the reduction of gritting on roads.
- 9.2.3 Mr Jermy suggested areas with part night lighting should be converted to LED and that the appendix be amended to state: "areas subjected to part night lighting were subjected to upgrades to LED". The Assistant Director of Highways reported that 2000 LED upgrades had been carried out as a trial and most main road lights were now LED. An invest-to-save approach was being taken by investing £1.34m to accelerate the programme of upgrades from 6 to 2 years. Areas with part night lighting would be upgraded when the lights were due for replacement to give best value for money. The Chairman did not wish to change the wording.
- 9.2.4 It was queried whether Members could see the revised gritting route before agreeing changes and if "non-safety critical maintenance" included grass cutting. The Assistant Director of Highways clarified that reduction in "non-safety critical maintenance" did not include grass cutting and that gritting routes could not be declared until fully revised; he **suggested** bringing the revised route to Committee in Spring 2018 for agreement.
- 9.2.5 It was suggested that Norfolk County Council could do more to ensure reasonable standards from bus services and re-coup refunds for late or non-run services. The Assistant Director of Planning and Economy reported that Norfolk County Council were reviewing with bus service providers routes which were performing well and those which did not offer best value for money.
- 9.2.6 The policy for DIY and demolition waste disposal at household recycling centres was queried. The Assistant Director of Planning and Economy reported it was proposed to remove the existing concession so people would pay to dispose of DIY waste at household recycling centres; costs would be benchmarked against that of hiring a skip or waste disposal costs.
- 9.2.7 Concerns were raised that the proposed savings could lead to long term costs such as accidents on non-gritted roads or an increase in fly tipping. The Assistant Director of Planning and Economy reported that fly tipping was an illegal activity and evidence showed that householders were not usually the people who flytipped. Road gritting would be based on evidence and a needs basis.
- 9.2.8 It was clarified that Norfolk County Council could not take a profit from on-street parking and any surplus was put into locality transport improvements; schemes would be consulted on before implementation.
- 9.2.9 Mr East handed a letter to the Chairman from Costessey Town Council containing

suggestions related to gritting and grit bins.

- 9.2.10 It was queried what percentage of cuts would be made to bus services. It was not possible to confirm this until the review had been completed but any changes to bus routes would be consulted on.
- 9.2.11 The Assistant Director of Planning and Economy clarified there would not be removal of any one gritting route, but optimising of all routes.
- 9.2.12 The effect on road flooding by savings to “non-safety critical maintenance” was queried. The Assistant Director of Highways clarified £200,000 was allocated to gully emptying which would be planned by risk assessment, so issue areas would not be affected. It was noted that Government now recommended this approach.
- 9.2.13 The effect on recycling activity in Norfolk of savings to waste reduction was queried. The Assistant Director of Planning and Economy was unsure but noted there was investment in household recycling initiatives elsewhere in the County budget.
- 9.2.14 The Chairman **suggested** that the approach to gritting included a consideration for every town and village to have a gritted route in and out. The Assistant Director of Planning and Economy noted this; Officers would deliver this where possible.
- 9.2.15 It was queried whether vehicles were fitted with smart trackers to assess the condition of roads. The Assistant Director of Highways clarified that a mechanical survey of part of the network was carried out annually and scheduled inspections were completed by highway inspectors to identify defects.
- 9.3 With 9 votes for and 4 votes against, the Committee:
- 1) **NOTED** that the Council’s current budget planning includes an assumed increase in council tax of 3.0% for the Adult Social Care precept, and an inflationary increase of 1.9% in 2018-19;
 - 2) **CONSIDERED** and **AGREED** the service-specific budgeting issues for 2018-19 as set out in section 3 of the report;
 - 3) **NOTED** that there were no planned 2018-19 savings which could be implemented during 2017-18 to provide an in-year saving; and
 - 4) In order to help close the forecast 2018-19 budget gap as set out in section 2 of the report:
 - a. **NOTED** that no savings identified for 2019-20 had the capacity to be brought forward to 2018-19;
 - b. **AGREED** the proposed new savings for 2018-19 (Table 4 as amended) for recommendation to Policy and Resources Committee;
 - c. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to Policy and Resources Committee the proposed new savings for 2018-19 which require consultation as set out in section 3 of the report.

10. Norwich Western Link project update and next steps

- 10.1.1 The Committee received the report providing an update on the progress to date for the Norwich Western Link project and the work undertaken since 2016.
- 10.1.2 The Infrastructure Delivery Manager reported that the pooled business rate funding was provisionally confirmed subject to a report to Policy and Resources Committee.

- 10.2.1 Mr Jermy reported that Labour would vote against the recommendations; since the NDR was not yet built and the benefits yet to be realised, and in light of the reported overspend of the NDR, they would not vote to adopt the report recommendations. Labour was supportive of sustainable transport and the scheme but felt it was not right to invest millions in a new road while cutting bus services.
- 10.2.2 It was noted that the modelling outcomes on p100 of the report did not mention 'rat-running' through rural areas which would be addressed by the building of the road.
- 10.2.3 The Infrastructure Delivery Manager confirmed there would be significant work on SSSIs and environmental impacts which would be provided during the consultation process.
- 10.2.4 A discussion was held over the issue of access to busses in rural areas of Norfolk; it was suggested that people in isolated communities should have public transport access to other towns. The Assistant Director of Planning and Economy noted this and highlighted that improving road infrastructure could lead to improvements in public transport by freeing up road space and businesses investing in bus services.
- 10.2.5 It was raised that there had been significant investment in walking, cycling and public transport as part of the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy; investment was ongoing.
- 10.3 With 10 votes for 2 against and 1 abstention, the Committee:
1. **NOTED** and **COMMENTED** on the progress of the project;
 2. **AGREED** to continue the project, with funding provided for the next stages of the project for a further year to the end of 2018, as set out in section 3 of the report;
 3. **AGREED** the scope of further work to the end of 2018 as set out in Appendix B of the report. The funding of this work would come from a bid to the Pooled Business Rates fund, with match funding allocated from the remaining A47 reserve budget;
 4. If the Pooled Business Rate funding was not confirmed Members **DELEGATED** authority to consider alternative funding strategies to the Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair of Environment, Development and Transport Committee and Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services, or to a review of the delivery timescales of the project to align with the available budget.

11. Risk Management

- 11.1.1 The Committee considered the report providing information from the latest risk register as at October 2017 following the latest review conducted in September 2017.
- 11.1.2 A Correction to page 116 was noted; under new risks, "risk had been opened to replace RM14292" should read RM14242.
- 11.2 The Committee **AGREED**:
- a) the changes to the risks reported by exception (in paragraph 2.2 and Appendix A), and other departmental risks (in Appendix E);
 - b) that the recommended mitigating actions identified in Appendix A were appropriate;
 - c) the definitions of risk appetite and tolerance in Appendix D.

12. Performance Management

- 12.1.1 The Committee reviewed the sixth performance management report based on the revised Performance Management System which was implemented as of 1 April 2016, and the Committee's 13 vital signs indicators.
- 12.1.2 It was noted that the access to market town graph on page 127 of the report was incorrect however the data in the report card was correct. This would be updated for the next report.
- 12.2 The Chairman agreed to discuss a question with Mr Sands after the meeting.
- 12.3 The Committee **REVIEWED** and **COMMENTED** on the performance data, information and analysis presented in the vital sign report cards and **AGREED** that the recommended actions identified were appropriate.

13. Finance Monitoring

- 13.1 The Committee received the report providing information on the budget position for services reporting to Environment, Development and Transport Committee for 2017-18.
- 13.2 The highway depreciation money shown in the report was queried; the Financial Business Partner for Community and Environmental Services clarified this was a capital accounting entry related to a historic spend and involving no money.
- 13.3 The Committee **NOTED**:
- a) The forecast out-turn position for the Environment, Development and Transport Committee;
 - b) The capital programme for this Committee;
 - c) The current planned use of the reserves and the forecast balance of reserves as at the end of March 2018.

14. Forward Plan and decisions taken under delegated authority

- 14.1 The Committee reviewed the forward plan and decisions taken by Officers under delegated authority.
- 14.2 Mr T Smith requested a report on railway infrastructure. The Assistant Director of Planning and Economy **agreed** that a report would be brought to the January 2018 meeting.
- 14.3 The Committee **AGREED** the forward plan with the addition of a report on railway infrastructure in January 2018.

The meeting closed at 11:16 am

**Mr Martin Wilby, Chairman,
Environment Development and Transport Committee**



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PUBLIC QUESTIONS TO ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER 2017

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

5.1 Question from Dr Iain Robinson

I am writing to voice my opposition to the potential proposal for a viaduct across the Wensum Valley, and the revival of the red route to extend the NDR - a costly and highly environmentally damaging route. This route would not only damage rare wetland habitat, but it would also destroy semi-ancient natural woodland and scar the uniquely beautiful Ringland Hills. My Question: how can this proposal possibly be justified when existing roads can be improved (I think primarily of the Weston Longville route along the B1535), and when it has already been rejected on environmental grounds?

Response by Chairman of EDT Committee

Thank you for the question. Our work completed to date is an assessment of indicative options and the Committee is being asked to review the case to continue with the project. If there is agreement to continue, the next steps include more detailed work on options. This is likely to include an assessment of an option to improve the route suggested (i.e. the B1535). Ultimately a range of options will be investigated, including more detailed consultation, before a preferred route or solution is adopted, taking into account a broad range of factors in the assessment.

5.2 Question from Jenn Parkhouse

Members of the public have been asked to leave EDT meetings whenever the ever-rising cost of the NDR was to be discussed. There is obviously a huge reluctance to release details of an overspend before they absolutely have to. Last week in an EDP Facebook Live interview Council Leader Cliff Jordan suggested that the overspend on the NDR was £25million and that he personally had always thought the final figure would be in the region of £200-205 million. Will Cllr. Wilby now confirm that it has long been common knowledge of the entire Council that there would be a massive overspend?

Response by Chairman of EDT Committee

The EDT Committee received information of a likely NDR project overspend on 21 June 2017. Exclusion of the public from that meeting was agreed by the EDT Committee in accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 where it meets the public interest test. I can confirm that the finances for the scheme, including the final project costs, will be in the public domain in due course, when ongoing commercial negotiations are concluded.

5.3 Question from Cllr Denise Carlo

At the NDR DCO examination, Norfolk County Council convinced the Assessors it could underwrite £60.34m of the £148.5m scheme. Since then, NDR costs have risen alarmingly and are heading towards £200m, excluding compensation and interest on borrowing. The Leader says the increases will be met from other budgets, but doesn't state which.. The Council also plans a £160m Wensum valley crossing, having previously told the Assessors it wasn't necessary.

How can the public trust the competence or veracity of the Council on major infrastructure projects and what does it indicate about the ethics of a council that priorities spending on road building when child poverty in Norwich is 29%?

Response by Chairman of EDT

The overall benefits of the NDR were tested robustly in public as a National Significant Infrastructure Project and the completed route will provide essential infrastructure for Norfolk, and in particular the City. This is consistent with this Council's recognition of the importance of good infrastructure and development to ensure the economic and social wellbeing for Norfolk and its people.

5.4 Question from Andrew M Cawdron

The WSP Report discussing the WLR indicates there is "a need for intervention in the NWQ and a Wensum Link could provide a solution that delivers high value for money." This is contrary to statements made and evidence provided to the Planning Inspectorate at the time of the DCO enquiry for the NDR, which claimed that the traffic flow studies showed that rat-running around the Western edge of Norwich would be reduced.(Inspectors report page 131 Clause 4.450). It is also contrary to the statement provided on the NDR website for the intervening years that there was no need for the NDR to joint with the A47.

Q. "With the Council needing to establish a further £100m of "savings" within the next four years and statements within the Committee papers noting that any cost overrun on the NDR would need to be met from other Council sources, is it not time to eliminate the environmentally destructive vanity project of a viaduct dual carriageway crossing the Wensum Valley, (ESD 2023?) and focus attention on the achievable objective of major improvements to the B1535 as the "feasible alternative", which has to be investigated anyway?"

Response by Chairman of EDT Committee

The WSP reports acknowledge there are a number of factors that have changed since the development and consideration the DCO for the NDR. For example, the planned dualling of the A47 between Easton and North Tuddenham, the new Food Enterprise Zone at Easton, and the progress of

the Local Plan Review process. The report also acknowledges that the impact of new infrastructure (i.e. the NDR) needs to be considered. Taking these into account, the feasibility work completed thus far shows that there is a case for a Western Link.

The work completed to date on the Norwich Western Link project is an assessment of indicative options and the Committee is being asked to review the case to continue with the project. If there is agreement to continue, the next steps include more detailed work on options. This is likely to include an assessment of an option to improve the route suggested (i.e. the B1535). Ultimately a range of options will be investigated, including more detailed consultation, before a preferred route or solution is adopted, taking into account a broad range of factors in the assessment.

MEMBER QUESTIONS TO ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER 2017

6. MEMBER QUESTIONS

6.1 Question from Cllr Terry Jermy

For a further year residents of MacKenzie Road in Thetford have experienced significant weed growth on the public highway and have complained about this repeatedly to Norfolk County Council. Could the current contractual requirements for the spraying of weeds be confirmed for members and can it be outlined how this contract is monitored. Are there penalties built-in if the contractor fails to deliver the service to an acceptable standard?

Response by Chairman of EDT Committee

I am sorry if the residents have not been happy with the standard of service. Urban areas, such as MacKenzie Road, are treated twice per year with the application of a spray applied weed killer. For this weed killer to be effective, there has to be some amount of growth already visible. Each year the growing season is slightly different and this dictates the timing of treatments. Weed growth does not normally cause any structural damage to footways and carriageway, but understandably is visually unattractive and gives rise to a number of customer complaints each summer.

The weed killing service forms part of the range of services delivered by Tarmac on behalf of the Council and they use a specialist sub-contractor. As such it is supervised by locally based Council staff from the Highways Area offices and audited along with all other works on a random sample basis. There are penalties built into the contract for poor performance and at the start of the contract in 2014, the Council withheld payment due to poor performance issues in Thetford, which at the time were reported to EDT Committee. When customers report problems, these are investigated by the Highways Area teams and issues are then addressed as necessary by Tarmac.

6.2 Question from Cllr Danny Douglas

Recently the main arterial road of Heigham Street Norwich lost its 20 minutely, seven day a week bus service it was replaced by several restricted services which do not run on Sundays, evenings and peak times, this cost the Council Tax payers £75,000 more.

Have the committee members considered that the flexibility that allows the operators to do this acts as a barrier to effective transport planning for all of Norfolk's transport users? Will the committee consider the preparation of a bus franchise scheme where bus routes will not be able to be changed with just 56 days' notice but in a timely manner allowing the Council to plan an effective system which makes the most of the capital and revenue investment from Norfolk's Community?

Response by Chairman of EDT

The services referred to form part of the overall bus network. Some services are privately run (known as commercial) services and some are funded by the council (known as subsidised) services. I understand that patronage was insufficient to operate the services by the operator First commercially, which led to route reviews. The most important thing to note is that Heigham Street services ran in parallel with other services on the nearby Dereham Road, so customers do have a realistic public transport option.

The Council's investment of around £75,000 supports a package of contracts procured on a deminimis basis across parts of Taverham and Drayton, Hellesdon - Mill Corner, and Hercules Road. Our investment is consistent with our policy to support services that would otherwise not be provided, whilst maintaining good value for money. The amendments were planned with Member and local customer feedback. The regulatory timescale is determined nationally and set by the Traffic Commissioner, although due to our good working relationships we are often made aware of thinking and plans far in advance of that time period to help negotiate and work through the best possible outcomes for Norfolk people.

This council has a good track record of delivering public transport services in partnership with bus operators, which has generated a stable, competitive and integrated network. Developments include smart ticketing, multi-operator tickets, quality corridors, punctuality improvements, increased reliability and investments in vehicles, driver training and service standards.

Whilst franchising is an option to consider for local authorities, it is interesting to note that no authority has adopted franchising. The Transport Authority that did look into it, North East Combined Authority, abandoned the process when it was deemed too unwieldy and expensive to operate, increasing costs by around 40% per year.

NOR - Update for EDT Committee from Working Group (for 20 October 2017)

At the EDT Committee meeting held on 21 June 2017, it was agreed that a Member Group would be formed to provide increased scrutiny of the closing stages of the delivery of the NDR. An initial meeting of the Group was held on 28 July 2017, with further meetings held on 14 September and 12 October. The following provides a brief summary for Committee of the most recent meeting:

1. The Group received an update on construction progress. This has remained in line with details previously reported to Committee, with the first section of the road (from Fakenham Road to Cromer Road due to be opened in November). Every effort continues to be made to complete the works as quickly and efficiently as possible to keep the overall project cost as low as possible.
2. The Member Group were updated on the commercial management and overall contract administration since the last meeting, with an update on any implications to project costs.
3. An update on current project audits was provided. There are three areas that are being reviewed and details will be reported to the Member Group as the output reports become available. Details will be reported to Committee.
4. The Group were updated on the latest contract position. Details remain commercially sensitive and confidential at this time and are therefore not provided in this note. Progress is being made and details will be reported to Committee when they are resolved.
5. A site Visit was arranged for the Member Group following the meeting. Those attending the visit travelled along the entire length of the new road and were able to raise questions with the construction team. They were impressed with the progress made on the ground and works completed so far.
6. The Member Group are also aware of various letters recently published in the local newspapers regarding the project costs. The comments made were noted and the Group want to be clear that they expect details to be reported in due course to Committee, and therefore published so that the public receive an explanation of the details relating to the final project costs.

For more details, please contact David Allfrey (Infrastructure Delivery Manager).

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