



Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 20 October 2021
at 10 am at County Hall Norwich

Present:

Cllr Steve Morphew (Chair)

Cllr Lana Hemsall (Vice Chair)
Cllr Carl Annison
Cllr Lesley Bambridge
Cllr Graham Carpenter
Cllr Nick Daubney
Cllr Barry Duffin

Cllr Robert Savage (substitute for Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris)
Cllr Keith Kiddie
Cllr Ed Maxfield
Cllr Jamie Osborn
Cllr Richard Price
Cllr Brian Watkins
Mr Giles Hankinson (Parent Governor representative)

Also present (who took a part in the meeting):

Cllr Martin Wilby
Tom McCabe

David Allfrey
Jeremy Wiggin
Karl Rands
Simon George
Peter Randall
Kat Hulatt
Karen Haywood
Tim Shaw

Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport.
Head of Paid Service and Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Infrastructure Delivery Manager
Transport for Norwich / City Agency Manager
Highway Services Manager
Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services
Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager
Head of Legal Services
Democratic Services Manager
Committee Officer

Sir David Amess

At the start of the meeting Councillors joined the Chair in a minute's silence as a mark of respect for Sir David Amess who had died earlier this month after being fatally stabbed while undertaking constituency duties as the MP for Southend.

1. Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris, Mrs Julie O' Connor (Church Representative) and Mr Paul Dunning (Church Representative)

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 Urgent Business

- 4.1 No urgent business was discussed.

5. Public Question Time

- 5.1 There were no public questions.

6. Local Member Issues/Questions

- 6.1 There was one local member question from Cllr Ben Price:

Does the Chair of Scrutiny agree that it is in the interests of effective Scrutiny for the full risk register of the Norwich Western Link project to be made available to the Scrutiny Committee?

- 6.2 Answer by the Chair:

The risk register that accompanied the OBC is published on the NCC website as 'OBC Overall Risk Allowance'. The includes a detailed quantitative breakdown of the risk allowance:

[Timeline and documents - Norfolk County Council](#)

Details related to risk will be discussed with the cross-party project Member Group as the project progresses. Since the award of the contract (following Cabinet approval in June 2021) the risk register is in the process of being updated and this will be used to provide updates at the Member Group meetings.

7 Call In

- 7.1 The Committee noted that there were no call-in items.

8 Electric Vehicle Strategy

- 8.1 The annexed report (8) was received.

- 8.2 The Committee received a report that set out ways in which the County Council could support the uptake of electric vehicles in Norfolk.

8.3 During discussion of the report with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, and with some of the officers who would be involved with the implementation of the strategy, the following key points were noted:

- The report before the Scrutiny Committee was different to that presented to the Cabinet in that it focused on ways to support and facilitate the uptake of electric vehicle charging opportunities across the county, the capacity of the electricity supply network, the recycling and disposal of batteries and how the Local Highways Member Fund could be used to help subsidise the cost of public charging points. The Chair emphasised that scrutiny's contribution should be unique, and not duplicate work taking place at Cabinet or at the Infrastructure and Development Select Committee.
- Officers pointed out that Norfolk had more charging points per 100,000 population than any other county in the East of England.
- There were currently 281 public recharging points in Norfolk (equal to one charging point for every thirteen vehicles) and the aim was to achieve 1,600 recharging points.
- Cllrs spoke about how, to effectively support the increase in demand for electric vehicles, it was important to encourage more lift sharing and make better use of buses and the use of other sustainable forms of transport.
- To achieve an overall electric vehicle infrastructure in Norfolk there needed to be other funding streams than just the Local Highway Members Fund.
- Officers said that it would be for each individual Local County Councillor to decide for themselves on how much of their allocation of the Local Highway Members Fund they wished to use to facilitate additional charging points in their division.
- Most electric vehicle charging happened at home and at night which was expected to be a central focus for future conversations around the charging system network and required infrastructure.
- The inclusion of EV charging requirements within Building Regulations would provide a standardised approach to EV charging equipment in new buildings across the country, helping to provide consistency.
- It was suggested that Government grant funding of up to 75% towards the cost of installing electric vehicle charging points at domestic properties across the UK should be extended so that it was made available for the installation of electric charging points on community provided car parks.
- In reply, officers said that installing charging points on community car parks might not always be the most appropriate solution in rural areas. Electric charging points needed to be installed where people most needed them and where the electricity network was best able to cope.
- One factor that could drive up the cost of installation of charge points in rural areas considerably was the cost of securing the necessary additional electrical capacity.
- The costs of installing cables and charge point hardware varied considerably based on site-specific conditions in relation to the local grid. In certain cases, the need to install charge points could necessitate significant grid upgrades which would be costly for the distribution network operator. In instances when this cost was exceptionally high, and likely to make the installation of charge points unviable, the Council might be expected to have to intervene more strongly to shape the local market.
- It was anticipated that those living in rural areas might need to travel longer distances to get to places and to require different vehicle charging

arrangements. This was one of the main reasons why the pilot study would centre on Norwich where the uptake in electric vehicles was expected to be highest.

- Cllrs said that during the implementation of the pilot study the Council would need to carefully consider how it could successfully balance the needs of all road users, especially pedestrians and those reliant on a safe and accessible network of urban footways.
- The Chair added that in addition to taking comments on whether the technical specifications of the pilot study were clear and met the intended policy aims it was important to take account of the impact vehicle charging cables had on those using footpaths with wheelchairs and buggies and those who had disabilities. It was important to discuss such issues with groups representing these people before raising expectations regarding EV charging schemes.
- Cllrs considered it important to also take account of equality impact issues such as the needs of disabled drivers and those living on low incomes. It was important for there to be support for those on lower incomes to access EVs through car sharing schemes.
- The pilot scheme would address issues for the 90% of vehicle users who did not have access to off road car parking spaces.
- The County Council would collaborate with electricity providers on capacity issues, including on how best to meet demand during peak periods.
- The Government recognised that there needed to be greater transparency and standardisation within the industry about the way in which people paid to charge their vehicles. The Norwich Pilot Scheme would address this issue to the benefit of the roll out of future schemes in urban areas.
- It was suggested that the pilot study should include forecast carbon reduction targets.
- Cllrs were of the view that a clear stage by stage plan was needed for the implementation of the strategy. This needed to include the setting of milestones and targets for the numbers of charging points in the county and when they were likely to be met.
- The strategy needed to be linked in with other Council strategies including the Local Transport Strategy and strategies to support the environment.
- The Vice-Chair said that further discussions should be held at officer level with the Broads Authority about how the strategy could fit in with their plans to increase the number of charging points. Holiday makers from all over the country as well as those living in rural areas would benefit from a joined-up strategy.
- Project engineers planned to undertake a desk top analysis of rural trip destinations to help identify suitable charging points.
- In summarising the debate, the Chair said that the Scrutiny Committee expected officers to consider the requirements of those living in rural as well as urban areas, the impact electric charging had on the use of urban streets by pedestrians, and to explore the extent to which the Local Highway Members Fund and other funding schemes could provide for the installation of electric charging points. Careful consideration needed to be given to the setting of milestones for the implementation of the strategy, the requirements for building regulations, and how the strategy fitted into other Council policies.
- The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport and the officers who had attended today's meeting.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the report and the answers given by the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport and the officers and ask to receive a further update report sometime in the new year.

9 Norwich Western Link Update

9.1 The Committee received the attached report (9) together with the delegated authority decision report (mentioned at paragraph 2.6.6 of the main report) which was circulated by email prior to the meeting. The Chair pointed out that this item was not a call in of the delegated decision report (which was still possible) but was to receive an update since the decisions made by the Council in June 2021.

9.2 During discussion of the report with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport and the Infrastructure Delivery Manager the following key points were noted:

- The Council was working with the contractor on the extent to which the use of low carbon products could form part of the detailed design of the project.
- In reply to questions about if the project would be delivered within the overall project cost of £198m, given current inflation concerns, the Infrastructure Delivery Manager said that inflation would not be a significant issue until the Council moved to the construction phase of the project in two years. The spending allocation for this financial year was £12m. The detailed costs of previous year and future year spending were set out in reports elsewhere and included an allowance for inflation.
- The risk register for this project (which did not form part of the report to this Committee) would continue to be updated to take account of changes in market conditions and inflationary concerns such as rising labour and material costs and would currently be a red risk. These matters would be reported to the project Board and cross-party project Member Group as the project progressed and escalated to Cabinet level if this became necessary.
- It was noted that while the risk register would be kept updated and details discussed with the Member Group, the details would not be published where there was potential for commercial sensitivity.
- It was the responsibility of the County Council's project design team (and not that of the contractor) to undertake/ review the environmental impact assessment that formed part of the documentation needed for the planning application which would be reviewed through the statutory process.
- A mechanism was already in place for Parish Councils to discuss any concerns they might have with project engineers.
- In reply to detailed questions, it was pointed out that boreholes on land at Ringland were essential to understand the ground conditions for the design of the project. Should a Councillor wish to question the legal powers by which the County Council was undertaking this work then this should be done outside of this meeting.
- Wider surveys were being undertaken in terms of ecology which were separate from the work associated with the boreholes.

- In reply to further questions, it was pointed out that cumulative impacts of carbon reduction from the Western Link would be considered in accordance with the appropriate guidance as part of the planning application and taking into account the local transport plan. When this matter would be reported to Councillors was yet to be determined. The Chair said the method of measuring the cumulative impact was complex and should be picked up outside of the meeting.
- In reply to questions regarding the cost benefit analysis for the project and cost comparisons with the withdrawn Cambridge to Oxford link, officers said that it was not possible to draw any such meaningful comparisons.
- A cost benefit analysis of the Western Link did not form part of the report to this Committee but was mentioned in the report considered by Cabinet.
- The project was running according to the overall timings in the published programme.
- The intention was to undertake the current pre-planning consultation stage before Christmas if possible.
- The Committee heard from a Councillor that it would take a very long time to achieve a biodiversity habitat equivalent to the environmental loss caused by the cutting down of veteran trees. Some Councillors said that such trees were irreplaceable. However, officers said that, in relation to the Broadland Northway tree losses that were referred to, the numbers of trees lost was not unusual for a scheme of this kind and that by continuing work to replace the lost trees, the Council was demonstrating its commitment to ensure commitments were delivered. Details regarding the number of trees impacted and the mitigation measures for the Norwich Western Link project would be provided as part of the statutory planning process.
- The Vice-Chair said that the Committee should note that the report showed the preparations for the project continued to follow government guidelines and the Council was expected to meet all its statutory obligations.

9.3 **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Committee place on record thanks to Martin Wilby, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Transport, and David Allfrey, Infrastructure Delivery Manager, for attending the meeting and answering Councillors detailed questions.**
- 2. That the Committee note the report and receive a further progress report sometime in the new year after the timing of the planning application is known.**

10 **Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Programme**

- 10.1 The annexed report (10) was received.
- 10.2 The Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager drew Cllrs attention to paragraph 1.4 of the report and the publication by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) of their 2020-21 national annual survey results for which a link was included in the report. In future CfGS annual survey reports would be reported to the Scrutiny Committee as part of the work programming process.

10.3 The Chair said that while all topics were subject to change, with the Committee remaining flexible to ensure the ability to adapt to emerging and urgent topics for consideration, he planned to add an item to the November meeting about the County Council budget planning process for next year. In reply to questions, the Chair noted that a broader plan to handle scrutiny and oversight of the Cawston Park Hospital SAR had been agreed, with the Norfolk HOSC appropriately taking the lead in concert with the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board. Wider themes that pertain directly to the County Council could be dealt with in due course, following feedback from the HOSC.

10.3 **RESOLVED**

That the Committee note the forward work programme as set out in the appendix to the report subject to the following:

- **an update on the budget setting process for 2022/23 being added to the agenda for November 2021.**
- **The committee to consider options to consult with service users when considering the item on 'People with Disabilities: Fees and Charging Policy' currently scheduled for the December meeting of the committee.**

The meeting concluded at 12.20 pm

Chair