

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting
13 March 2017

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD HIGHWAYS LIAISON MEETING held on Monday 13 March 2017 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: County Councillors
R.H.Smith (Chairman)
M.Cowan, M.Mills-Bishop and P.Zukowskyj

Borough Councillors
H.Beckett, D.Bell, J.Cragg, B.Fitzsimon, K.Holman, T.Kingsbury,
M.Perkins and F.Thomson

Town and Parish Councils
L.Harrison and B.Morris (Welwyn Parish Council)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: County Officers
Highway Locality Manager (Mid Herts) (S.Dibben)
Road Safety Programme Manager and Chair Strategic Road Safety
Partnership, Hertfordshire Highways (S.Brown)
Hertfordshire County Council Data Team (G.Beaumont)
Ringway (D.Thomas)

Borough Officers
Parking Services Manager (V.Hatfield)
Governance Services Officer (M.Lowe)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from

County Councillors M.Cook and S.L.Johnston
Borough Councillors H.Bromley, S.Markiewicz and R.Trigg
Hatfield Town Clerk C.Lloyd
Woolmer Green Parish Councillor J.Hawkins
Woolmer Green Parish Clerk J.Pearce
Essendon Parish Clerk D.Daniell

2. ROAD SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Road Safety Programme Manager presented an overview of the work of the County Council's road safety partnership which highlighted the following areas:-

- Hertfordshire County Council's Transport Access and Road Safety
- The Road Safety Partnership
- Police and Crime Commissioner's Road Safety Fund

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- Community Concerns
- Successful Bids
- Strategic Priorities for Hertfordshire
- Road Safety Headlines

Responding to points raised by Councillors, Officers informed that they were unable to comment on any one particular cycleway. However, it was surprising that a considerable amount of antisocial behaviour carried out by road users was by cyclists. As 80% of cyclists had driving licences this was difficult to understand.

Councillors agreed that a national campaign which encouraged both cyclists and pedestrians would be very welcome.

Councillors noted the following:-

- 'Hi-vis' vests, funded by Ocado, were given to cyclists and pedestrians when stopped at night by the Police in unlit areas. The Police also kept sets of LED lights in their cars, which were also given to cyclists who did not have a set of lights on their bicycle. This was a far quicker and safer method of ensuring cyclists were made more visible.
- There would be at least a three percent increase in traffic over the next 10-15 years. This amount may increase to as high as 20% by 2032 should housing development in the county meet the housing needs forecast.
- Statistics indicated that a high percentage of trips made in a car were for less than three miles. Work would be required to reduce this figure, including initiatives being put in place. People would need to feel safe.
- There were many initiatives in place to try to deal with parking near to schools, such as Park and Stride, whereby parents were encouraged to park a mile away from the school and for the family to walk. This initiative had shown that children's behaviour, concentration and attention in school has improved. Initiatives tended to work very well when it was the children who encouraged their parents to get involved.

The Chairman advised that all schools, including private schools, were required to have a school travel plan in place. The purpose of the school travel plan, which schools were required to refresh every five years, was to encourage parents to walk to school and to reduce the number of journeys they made by car to drop off or pick up their children. The school travel plan applied to both parents and staff. County Officers were assigned to individual schools. The implementation of the school travel plan had been a tremendous success with over 50% of pupils walking to school.

Councillors acknowledged that one of the reasons for parking problems near to schools may be due to an increased number of working parents dropping their children off at school by car before rushing off to work.

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In response to comments regarding the increase in road casualties, particularly of young male drivers, the Road Safety Programme Manager explained that one reason which contributed to this was due to the development of the teenage brain. Teenagers' attitude to risk had not developed.

Councillors were of the view that learner drivers were not being taught to drive safely and that there was a correlation between the method used to teach people to drive and the number of accidents.

The Road Safety Programme Manager advised that graduate driving licences were being introduced, whereby newly qualified drivers were not permitted to drive at night or to have more than one passenger in the car at any one time. Discussions were being held on the possibility of trialling the introduction of a virtual reality programme, whereby learner drivers received hazard and perception training.

A Councillor expressed dissatisfaction regarding the length of time it had taken for remedial work on a particular junction to be assessed following accidents resulting in significant personal injury. The junction referred to had been identified as the 56th most dangerous junction in Hertfordshire. The engineering works, when eventually undertaken, had been resurfacing and line markings, which in his view, had not been particularly challenging.

The Road Safety Programme Manager advised that although he was not familiar with the particular junction in question, all junctions were graded on the basis of the data intelligence received and any other issues, then prioritised. Work was then carried out in priority order and the budget available. In addition, there was tremendous pressure on the financial resources available to Officers.

The presentation on the Road Safety Partnership was NOTED.

3. TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT DATA REPORT 2016

The Senior Transport Planning and Data Officer presented key data on how people were travelling around Hertfordshire's transport network and the implications of this. Traffic and movement trends in Hertfordshire and Welwyn Hatfield were detailed in the presentation.

The presentation covered the following topics:

- 2016 Traffic and Transport Data Report – based on 2015 data
- Hertfordshire County Travel Survey 2015
- Why do we collect this information?
- Who is it aimed at?
- 2015 County Travel Survey
- How do the sampled Welwyn Hatfield residents travel to work?
- What do the sampled Welwyn Hatfield residents think of transport in Hertfordshire?
- Traffic Flow

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- Congestion (link and junction)
- Congestion (journey time)
- Air quality
- Passenger Transport
- Active Travel

Responding to questions from Councillors, the Parking Services Manager suggested that one possible reason that Hatfield railway station was not as busy as it had been was due to the recent redevelopment of the car park. Drivers had made alternative arrangements to using the station or for parking. Another contributory factor was that there had been a significant change in the population of Hatfield due to students attending the university.

The Officer from the Hertfordshire County Council Data Team confirmed that the data presented to Councillors and made available on the County Councils website was robust and sound. All data was calibrated should the figures not appear to be correct and were investigated if unexpected variances occurred. Officers would not use any data they were unsure of.

County Councillors commented that they no longer received the annual report which they had found very useful previously as it gave details of routing and accidents. Also that small interventions from the Highways Locality Budget (HLB) which could be used to deal with accident blackspots would be welcomed.

Borough Councillors were of the view that County Councillors received additional information to that of the Borough Councillors. The accident data update showing fatal and injury accidents was of particular interest.

Action:

- Councillors requested that the Divisions be sent the annual Traffic and Transport Data Report (TTDR).
- The most recent quarterly accident data update was to be circulated to all County, Borough, Town and Parish Councillors connected with Welwyn Hatfield

The Traffic and Transport Data Report 2016 was NOTED.

4. RINGWAY'S SEASONAL UPDATE

The Ringway representative made a presentation which outlined the schemes and projects delivered by the contractor, together with the challenges which had been overcome, planned works programs and proposed service improvements.

The presentation covered the Highway Service Term Contract – The Drainage Asset and included:-

- The Highway Drainage System

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- The Highway Drainage Issues
- The Highway Gully
- Drainage Data
- Highway Drainage Lesson Learnt

Councillors noted that the County Council were responsible for 168,000 gullies, which were cleared on an 18 month rolling cycle. The details of the gully clearing programme continued to be available on the internet.

Councillors expressed some dissatisfaction regarding the fault reporting system, such as the point of entry onto the system; that the report was closed without being resolved or an explanation given as to the reason why the case had been closed. Redirection or updates emails to advise to whom the fault had been referred to; action taken or closed were not received.

Councillors were of the view that more information should be obtainable from the database which would enable detailed updates to be provided to residents.

The Ringway representative advised that on occasion it may take some time, possibly up to three to four years, and several attempts to resolve a localised flooding issue. Should rodding or jetting the gullies prove unsuccessful then, where appropriate, ditches may be cleared or re-dug, which may only be possible when the overgrown hedges had been cut back.

The size of the outfall of a gully and whether it was connected to a watercourse or soakaway may also affect the run-off rate. The turnaround for fault reports to resolve a flooding issue maybe as long as three or four years. Each report would be prioritised. Feedback was not usually provided sooner than three to four months. Repeatedly reporting faults would highlight the problem.

Councillors were of the view that, ideally, in order to provide residents with the best service, a separate fault reporting system would be made available for Members. The dedicated fault reporting system would provide improved information to Councillors, which would be more open, transparent and helpful especially if a problem was on-going for a long period of time.

Councillors were also of the view that, with regard to the kerb flooding, there was a highway design issue in some cases, which would not always be resolved as it was not considered to be high on the County Council's list of priorities. Drainage strips should be made a condition of planning applications where hardstanding for a driveway was laid to the highway.

The Ringway representative informed Councillors that the increased amount of hardstanding on residential property certainly added to the problem as did run-off, particularly in rural areas. Ringway worked closely with the flooding team at the County Council who advised homeowners.

The presentation on Ringway's Seasonal Update was NOTED.

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5. DISCRETIONARY HIGHWAY SCHEMES

The Highway Locality Manager provided an update on the Discretionary Highway Scheme which included:-

- Highway Locality Budget Schemes
- End of Financial Year Update
- Job Status
- Completed Schemes and
- County Council Election Year 2017

The Chairman, in response to a question from a Councillor regarding whether the HLB should be allocated to local Councillors to accelerate the process and to it spend it more wisely on local projects as determined by the Borough Councillors, advised that the County Councillors did not have a completely free hand. Two thirds of the budget was allocated for capital projects. The Highways Locality Officer (HLO) was heavily involved in the process and selected projects from a list which was drawn up from the concerns raised by residents for assessment and survey. The HLO was used to develop projects using knowledge of the Division and to be reactive to the requests of the communities. A post implementation assessment was carried out to ascertain whether the project was working well.

The Highway Locality Manager advised that the schemes were put to the community via the Parish, Borough and County Councillors who were consulted on the use of the discretionary budget.

The Parking Services Manager confirmed that County Highway Officers worked very closely with Borough colleagues when Traffic Regulation Orders were under consideration. Discussions and consultations were also held with those who were involved in the Traffic Regulation Orders at the junction identified. It was noted that there was often a knock-on effect when a Traffic Regulation Order was put in place.

The Discretionary Highway Schemes presentation was NOTED.

6. WHAT'S IN THE TRANSPORT NEWS

The Highway Locality Manager highlighted on a number of Transport news items which would impact on Hertfordshire's road network, which was NOTED.

The presentation covered:-

- Transport Update
- National Transport Update

The Chairman, on behalf of the Councillors thanked the Road Safety Programme Manager for his attendance and presentation.

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A full set of presentation slides are attached to these Minutes.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the Highways Liaison Meeting would not be confirmed until the Annual Council meeting on 22 May 2017. A meeting would be scheduled in October 2017 and Councillors would be notified as soon as a date had been finalised.

Items for the agenda for the next meeting

- LED lighting update
- Waste plant
- Central Management System

Councillors were requested to advise the Chairman of any other items they wished to be discussed at the next meeting.

Meeting ended at 9.35 pm
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