

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting
15 October 2019

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD HIGHWAYS LIAISON MEETING held on Tuesday 15 October 2019 at 7.30 pm in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AE.

PRESENT: County Councillors R.Smith (Chairman)
S.Boulton, L.Chesterman, N.Quinton, and P.Zukowskyj.

Borough Councillors S.Boulton (as above) J.Caliskan, A.Chesterman, L.Chesterman (as above) M.Cowan, J.Cragg, A.Dennis, S.Elam, B.Fitzsimon, T.Kingsbury, M.Larkins, F.Marsh, H.Quenet, J.Quinton, D.Richardson and P.Zukowskyj (as above).

Parish/Town Councillors A.Gribble (Woolmer Green Parish Council)
C.Lloyd (Hatfield Town Council)
J.Pearce (Woolmer Green Parish Council)

OFFICIALS PRESENT: County Officers

Highway Locality Manager, Mid Herts (P. Gellard)
Lead Assistant Highway Manager (Z.Iqbal)
Assistant Highway Manager (D.Pearman)

Borough Officers

Parking and Cemetery Manager (V.Hatfield)
Community and Environment Officer (D.Watts)
Governance Services Officer (H.Johnson)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from:

Borough Councillors – Councillors D.Bell, T.Jackson-Mynott, S.Kasumu, S.Markiewicz, T.Mitchinson, B.Sarson, F.Thomson, S.Thusu and R.Trigg.

County Councillor - Councillor M.Eames-Petersen

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting
15 October 2019

2. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

HLM Protocol

The Chairman referred to a later agenda item where it would be proposed to introduce "Workshops" or Topic Groups to look at particular issues in the borough. Members could then make recommendations to both the borough and county councils.

WGC Centenary Project – Gateway Signage

The Chairman advised that there were four County Councillors each with a £4k budget for the project. The aim of the project was to ensure that evident to people when they came to Welwyn Garden City that they would know they had arrived due to the positioning of signs positioned in nine key locations around the outside of the town.

The final design of the sign was seen by Members on the presentation slide and Members noted that there would be "Gateway Gardens" underneath the signs, with drought tolerant planting.

Locality Team Structure

County Council elected members received the personal support of Assistant Highways Managers (AHMs), who not only provided a one-stop-shop to all Highways Locality Budget (HLB) matters, but also acted as the Members' gateway into the Whole Client Service.

3. LED LIGHTING UPDATE

The presentation by the Assistant Highway Manager updated Members on the conservation area street lighting - the installation of LED lanterns between September and December 2019.

An email from the Senior Asset Manager, P Simpson (HCC) circulated to district and county members in early October 2019 advised of the status and project:

- Standard LED lighting was currently being installed in sites that met criteria
- CU Phosco P107 (which had a LED lantern with an opaque bowl mounted on a post) would be installed December 2019 and were being used across WGC conservations areas bar the town centre.
- Heritage lighting would installed December 2019/January 2020
- The majority of lights would be CU Phosco P107 post tops

Members noted that the criteria for side entry LED units (street lights with arms) was:

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting
15 October 2019

- Where existing side entry lanterns were originally installed on newer residential developments, such as Rooks Close.
- Where existing side entry lanterns were originally installed on local collector roads (higher columns typically 8 to 10 metres in height), such as Longcroft Lane.
- Where the first column (typically 8 to 10 metres in height), located in a residential road which was directly off a local collector road had a side entry lantern as part of the original design requirements, such as the junction of Rooks Hill and Fordwich Road.
- Where post top lanterns had been mounted onto higher columns (typically 8 to 10 metres in height), located on local collector roads, such as Rooks Hill.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

Some Members had not received the email from the Senior Asset Manager at HCC, P Simpson, which had been circulated to district and county Members in early October 2019 advising of the status and Led Lighting project.

The chairman was aware that there had been concerns about the LED installation and the nature of the lighting. The colour of the LED would be bright white light and experience had showed (such as Valley Road) that although there might have been initial dislike from residents they had grown accustomed to them.

Officers confirmed the benefits of LED lights - use of offside entry LED lights enabled direct light over the carriageway and therefore improved road safety. In addition that LED lights required less power and therefore despite investment of £6-7 million there would be a financial benefit.

Some Members raised concerns about the health risks of using LED lights and Officers confirmed that there was no conclusive data on the issue.

Whether the lack of consistency locally could be addressed which was also a concern of the Welwyn Garden City Society.

Members highlighted that the Conservation areas also included King George IV, Beehive and the new Pear Tree area in Welwyn Garden City. Officers agreed to check with Senior Asset Manager at HCC, P.Simpson, that they were included although it was understood that borough Planning Officers had been engaged with early on in the process to ensure that all Conservation Areas were included. It was subsequently confirmed that the aforementioned areas were all included in the Conservation areas.

4. HIGHWAY LOCALITY BUDGET (HLB) UPDATE

The presentation by the Lead Assistant Highway Manager and Assistant Highway Manager briefed Members about the delivery of discretionary highway schemes.

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting
15 October 2019

- The total 2019/20 HLB in Welwyn Hatfield was £720,000
- There were approximately 135 schemes
- The majority of schemes were on track for completion this financial year
- Projects included carriageway resurfacing, footway repairs, traffic signs and road markings and traffic calming.

Officers thanked Members for their help in delivering the scheme and informed Members that at this point in the year there was only one percent of the budget left.

Members thanked Officers in turn and highlighted the limits of the budget and managing residents' expectations due to the high financial cost of projects which might only benefit a small section of the borough at any one time.

5. FUTURE MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

The Highways Locality Manager advised Members that there would a choice of hosting either a HLM or Highway Workshop.

HLMs were introduced in 2012 as a successor to the Highway Joint Member Panels (HJMPs) in all borough/district areas.

During 2017 and 2018 only 20 out of a possible 40 of HLMs took place County wide. Of those meetings that did take place, it was noted that there was collectively an overall low to medium attendance ranging from 25% - 30%.

In 2018 HLM Chairmen were offered the opportunity to take part in an online survey about the HLMs, which subsequently identified the desire to replace the existing HLMs with Highway Workshops.

In April 2019 the Highways and Environment Cabinet Panel considered a report, which sought their direction on replacing the existing HLMs with Highway Workshops and the Panel endorsed the option where the Chairman would have the choice of hosting either a HLM (to present updates on projects and issues at a borough or district level) or a Highway Workshop (to focus on local casework issues). The Chairman should decide on best meeting format going forward considering frequency and attendance levels from previous meetings.

It was agreed that an online survey to be sent to all WHBC County and Borough Councillors to seek feedback on future meeting format.

The Assistant Highway Manager suggested the topic of verge protection and Members came forward with further suggestions to be considered:

- Road closure signs and their impact on small businesses

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting
15 October 2019

- Road flooding (e.g. the Campus), due to blocked drains/ manhole covers and poor road resurfacing, leaf clearance from gutters, underground investigations e.g. Holwell Lane, timing of HCC work on public highway and local issues, resurfacing the road and grit In the gullies.

Members were of the view that it would be useful to have the opportunity to scrutinize local issues and add to the work program at a county level.

It was agreed that background papers would need to be circulated prior to a workshop so that everyone was well informed prior to a workshop style meeting.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Highways Liaison Meeting was provisionally booked for 12 March 2020 starting at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, The Campus, Welwyn Garden City.

Meeting ended at 8.31pm
HJ