

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting  
12 October 2021

## WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the WELWYN HATFIELD HIGHWAYS LIAISON MEETING  
held on Tuesday 12 October 2021 at 7.00 pm via Zoom.

PRESENT: Councillors T.Kingsbury (Chairman)

D.Bell, M.Birleson, J.Bond, J.Boulton, L.Chesterman,  
J.Cragg, G.Gannev, G.Hayes, P.Hebden, A.Hellyer,  
M.Holloway, C Juggins, T.Kingsbury, L.Musk, R.Platt,  
J.Quinton, P.Smith, F.Thomson, S.Thusu, R.Trigg,  
S.Tunstall, F.Wachuku and P.Zukowskyj

### OFFICIALS

PRESENT:

P. Gellard, Highway Locality Manager HCC  
R. Thacker, Head of Highways Strategy and  
Implementation HCC  
D. Granger, HERT Project Sponsor HCC  
P. Simpson, Senior Asset Manager & Team Leader HCC  
J. Anthony, Principal Governance Officer

---

#### 1. INTRODUCTION AND CHAIRMAN ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members acknowledged the work of the previous chair Councillor Richard Smith.

#### 2. NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2020

The notes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### 3. HERT - INTRODUCING THE HERTFORDSHIRE-ESSEX RAPID TRANSIT

Councillors received a presentation from Rupert Thacker, Head of Highways Strategy and Implementation at Hertfordshire County Council, on the Hertfordshire Essex Rapid Transit (HERT) project. The project sought to improve cross county transport connections as part of the A14 Corridor Strategy. Members noted that 67% of journeys made by private car. This was partly due to the lack of convenient ways to travel via public transport along the corridor. Going forward, the expected growth along the corridor (over 50,000 new homes and 50,000 new jobs) would create further travel demand on the corridor network, both on the highway routes and public transport services.

As well as providing increased transport capacity, the HERT project would seek to realise environmental and sustainability benefits and serve both new and

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting  
12 October 2021

existing residents and communities. The project would also look to address wider connectivity issues, such as the need to travel into, and out of London, in order to travel between different parts of the county.

Officers explained the project development process. The long-term programme was envisaged to take circa 10-15 years to deliver. The development phase would take up to 5 years to complete, costing £5 million, whilst the estimated construction costs was between £1.5 billion and £2.4 billion, depending on the final route and transport mode chosen.

Darren Granger, HERT Project Sponsor at Hertfordshire County Council, explained to the Councillors the process for developing the Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC). Three indicative scenarios were being considered; a Direct route along the A414 corridor which would prioritise minimising end to end journey times (although this would miss certain urban centres, such as Welwyn Garden City); a Connected route which would prioritise maximum accessibility along the corridor (although this would involve longer journey times along the route); and a Network Max route, which would have segregated sections to achieve optimal journey times and serve development opportunities.

Councillors noted the key milestones of the project. This included a stakeholder engagement (Phase 1) in the summer of 2021, with a soft launch. This would follow a public engagement (Phase 2) in the autumn of 2021. The SOBC would be finalised over Winter 2021/22 and submitted for funding approval in the spring of 2022. Officers confirmed that the Department of Transport were supportive of the project and any proposals would need to be woven into the bus improvement plan.

Councillors discussed the proposal and the following points were raised:

- There were only two roads between Hatfield and St Albans, which was under pressure at the moment, and would worsen if certain developments went ahead
- Officers confirmed that they would work with Planners to consider impacts of large developments
- Concerns were raised with the risk of the project going over budget
- The choice of transport technology would be determined in the latter stages of the development phase, given the speed of development in this area. The project team would first concentrate on developing the corridor before drilling down into specific sites. This should then help inform the choice of technology and vehicle type. However, integration with existing rail network would be key, especially given the prohibitive cost and logistical issues involved in creating new railway lines and stops
- Whilst the mode and routes had not been chosen, indicative journey routes may help stakeholders and the wider public to engage with the project
- Officers confirmed they had engaged with the bus companies

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting  
12 October 2021

- School routes needed to be considered, including those that were lacking at present, for example between Welwyn Garden City and Hertford
- The pandemic had changed travel behaviours, but long-term implications were still unknown. The team were modelling options between different towns but would revisit these models and underlying assumptions when regular patterns re-emerged
- It was envisaged that the system would go in both directions, but that would depend on the route and technology chosen
- The university was a key consideration
- The team would look to see how the system would co-exist with the Alban Way
- The public engagement would be delivered in a variety of ways

#### 4. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DEFECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Councillors received a presentation from Peter Simpson, Senior Asset Manager & Team Leader at Highways Operations, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) on the county's Defect Management Approach (DMA). Officers explained that the highway network was maintained on a planned and reactive basis. Reactive maintenance (Cat 1 and Cat 2) was undertaken in line with HCC's Defect Management Approach (DMA) which underlined HCC's expectations in relation to assessing and responding to highway faults regarding intervention levels and response times.

Members noted that the DMA was underpinned by three key documents. These were: 1) The inspection manual, which provides guidance for the inspection of highways and the assessment of faults identified by Ringway safety inspectors; 2) The enquiry guidance notes, which sets out guidance for assessing faults which have been reported by the public or other stakeholders; and 3) The assess and decide strategy, which sets out HCC's strategy for the prioritisation and commitment to Emergency, Cat 1 and Cat 2 response work. Officers confirmed that the DMA was subject to periodic review.

Councillors were informed that 82,000 faults had been reported in the last year across the county. Most had come through the dedicated web portal ([www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/report-a-problem/report-a-highway-fault/](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/report-a-problem/report-a-highway-fault/)), with only 1% coming through emails and letters and 2% coming through telephone calls. The faults would be triaged by inspectors who would ensure the fault is correctly classified, and this would help ensure officers were properly prepared when they arrived on site to resolve the issue.

Councillors raised the following point:

- Queries were raised about new residential roads being built and whether these would be adopted by the county. Councillors noted the problems that may be encountered in future years should these roads remain outside the network. Officers explained that there were challenges to

Welwyn Hatfield Highways Liaison Meeting  
12 October 2021

adopting these roads, and the county would need to assure itself that it was in the public interest to adopt the roads.

- The flooding issues around the QE2 hospital were noted. This had been a recurring issue, and the route cause had yet to be identified. Officers explained that an emergency response would seek to make the situation safe but may not be able to fix the underlying problem.

5. FUTURE MEETING FORMAT

Officers and Councillors discussed the format of these meetings going forward. There was a need to strike the right balance with using the meeting to discuss strategic issues affecting the borough and responding to casework issues affecting councillors' constituents. Feedback was invited from Councillors, which could be provided directly to Paul Gellard or through the Chairman.

Meeting ended at 8.48 pm  
JA