

## **Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

### **Wednesday, 24 June 2015, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm**

#### **Minutes**

#### **Present:**

Dr K A Pollock (Chairman), Mr G J Vickery (Vice Chairman), Mr A A J Adams, Ms P Agar, Mr W P Gretton, Mr M E Jenkins, Mr J W R Thomas and Mr P A Tuthill

#### **Also attended:**

Mr M L Bayliss, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Transformation and Commissioning  
Mr S E Geraghty, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure  
Mr J H Smith, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways  
Mr T A L Wells

Rachel Hill (Strategic Commissioner, Major Projects), Mark Colston (Principal Project Engineer (Street Lighting)), Nick Twaite (Infrastructure Asset Manager), Jon Fraser (Community Relationship and Engagement Manager), Suzanne O'Leary (Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager) and Stella Wood (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

#### **Available Papers**

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 May 2015 (previously circulated).

(Copies of A will be attached to the signed Minutes).

#### **211 Apologies and Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Mr A T Amos.

A member of the public wished to speak during Public Participation in relation to Item 8 the Ketch Roundabout. As no others wished to speak on any other item, the Chairman advised that Public Participation would be moved to before Item 8.

#### **212 Declarations of Interest and of any Party Whip**

None.

**213 Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting**

Members felt they had not had sufficient time to confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2015 as a correct record. A Member felt that some amendments or additions might be required in relation to the discussion on Superfast Broadband and the Chairman agreed to defer the Item to the next meeting.

**214 Street Lighting**

The Strategic Commissioner Major Projects and the Principal Project Engineer (Street lighting) were invited to discuss progress on the roll out of Street Lighting reductions and potential energy savings.

As outlined in the agenda, in 2012 the County Council spent £2.4 million per annum on energy costs for its 52,000 street lights and 8,000 illuminated road signs (19% of the Council's CO2 emissions). A Scrutiny Task Group had reviewed ways in which energy and cost savings could be made, the impact on communities and the views of local people. The options considered were switching off, dimming and converting to energy saving lights.

Following a successful trial in Droitwich, Cabinet approved a change in policy to switch off street lighting for part of the night (from midnight to 6am) and endorsed the street lighting energy saving project on 6 February 2014.

A progress report was attached to the agenda at Appendix 2. It was highlighted that the part-night switch off project had been running for over a year and was on target to be completed in April 2016.

The consumption of energy by street lighting was continually reducing. The largest contributor to energy saving was currently the part-night switching off.

Savings were being achieved through converting some lights to part-night, dimming, and requiring LEDs in new highway schemes. Any failed units were also being replaced with LEDs. High wattage lamps were being replaced with energy efficient lamps.

Capital investment was needed to achieve further savings. The Council was reviewing the business case for such capital investment.

To date, 11,000 lamps had been switched to part night illumination. Benefits included:

- Annual energy savings of 1,354,000 kiloWatt-hours

(kWh)

- Annual energy cost saving (@ 11p per kWh) of £150,000
- Annual carbon commitment charges saving per annum (@ £16per tonne) of £9700.

Currently, around 400 comments had been received from residents. Most were for individual lights to be switched back on or for the initiative to be halted because, for example, crime may increase, vehicles were left vulnerable on unlit highways and people did not feel safe after midnight. However, there was no hard evidence from the police that reduced lighting was directly linked to individual crimes. The project team had ongoing discussions with local policing teams, however to date no requests from the public had resulted in lights being switched back on. There had been some increases crime in some areas but these were spread over day and night time periods and could not be attributed to lights being switched off.

Only lights in residential areas were being switched off, not those on main traffic routes. About one third would remain lit all night at locations such as junctions and bends. It was acknowledged that mistakes could be made and that some switched off lights could be swapped with others if necessary.

Maps showing which lights would be part-night illuminated and which would remain on all night were published on the County Council's website. Each plan was also displayed in the local library. At the start, the team had run sessions in local supermarkets to promote the initiative but public interest was very low. To make better use of limited resources, more emphasis was given to promoting the initiative through local media and to direct readers of the website, to the Worcestershire Hub and libraries for more information.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made.

Most residents, although not all, had welcomed the initiative in Redditch. Concerns raised at the Redditch Highways Forum and Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings were mainly about individual lights being turned off and fear of crime. Most residents had been surprised when they noticed lights switched off at night and the local member suggested that the Council should issue press releases and consider what else could be done to alert local people, as not everyone used IT or visited the

local library.

The Panel was advised that initial briefings for Members in affected areas had been arranged before implementation and had been poorly attended. As public interest outside supermarkets had been so low, the emphasis in future would be on local press releases and paid for space in local papers.

In relation to whether there was any indication of potential tariff increases it was explained that there had been no increases to date although it was a country wide issue based on supply and demand. One or two local authorities turning off lights at night would not make much difference although forty authorities turning off could potentially affect tariffs in future.

It was confirmed that there was no plan to roll out blanket LED coverage across the county although there were a few pilot areas. The case for further capital investment was being considered.

Switch off had already been rolled out across Redditch, Kidderminster, Droitwich and other towns across the County. Worcester City and Malvern were next on the list. It was confirmed that the project would apply to all areas of the County.

Members asked if it was possible determine from the comments received from the public, how many residents were for or against switch-off, and it was explained that each comment was responded to individually so it was difficult to say. If people were concerned about road safety, the team would look again at the situation.

A member asked if there had been any comparison of crime levels or vandalism between areas where lights had been turned off compared to similar areas where lights were left on and was advised that the Research and Intelligence Team had started recording types of crimes committed during different time periods. These were spread over day time, during switch off, and evening/night for different post code areas. It was too early to see trends as data had only been gathered for about 3 months. Members wished to see the results next year.

A table showing the cost of converting the various different types of street lights in the County (detailed on page 10 of the agenda) showed that the cost of replacing all street lights in the County with LEDs would be over

**215 Highway Maintenance**

£14.5m with an annual energy saving of over £1m. Further savings would be made on lower lamp replacement costs following completion. Members asked if some companies such as Magnatech were still offering schemes to provide LEDs for free in exchange for the energy savings and whether such schemes would be considered. It was confirmed that any such schemes were being considered as well as the possibility of funding from the Green Investment Bank.

A Member asked the view of the Directorate on an accident in another authority where a Coroner had commented that a main factor in a lady being killed on the road was that street lights had been switched off at night. The member's view was that the main cause was that the lady was in the middle of the road at night and the driver should have been doing a safe speed for the conditions so that stopping distance matched the available visibility. The Directorate understood that this accident had happened on a major route and reiterated that in Worcestershire lights would not be switched off on major routes in Worcestershire. It was reiterated that only lights in residential areas would be switched off, and in these areas, lights at junctions and bends would still be left on to provide reference points for residents.

The Director of Business, Environment and Community, the Strategic Commissioner – Major Projects, the Infrastructure Asset Manager and the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Highways were invited to discuss the Highways Maintenance Service Contract (HMSC).

As outlined in the agenda, the new Highways Maintenance Contract was awarded to Ringway from 1 April 2014. Cabinet suggested that, in support of the review process, a scrutiny review be undertaken 12 to 18 months from contract award.

On 27 March 2014, this Panel had received an update on the differences between the old and the new contract and how the new contract was expected to deliver better value for money (details of the new contract were outlined in the 12 December 2014 Cabinet agenda). Further detail and an update on the new contract were attached at Appendix 1 to the agenda for this meeting.

Headline statistics for the first 12 months of the contract were as follows:

- 154km (5.2% of the network) of planned Carriageway Surfacing projects and 138,000sqm

- of structural Carriageway patching delivered
- 32,423 Safety Defects completed (all within the allocated time)
- Over 49,000 Gullies emptied
- Over 12,000t of recycled material produced at Stamford Depot
- £400k of Vehicle Restraint Systems upgraded.

The Panel was advised that the main difference between the old (NEC contract) and the new (HMSC) contract was that the new one was outcome based. This was a major change to how the various cyclic services, such as gully emptying, were delivered as it allowed the Contractor to programme the works for a set price within the constraints detailed in the Service Information. This led to greater efficiency, producing a saving of £850k per annum when compared to the previous Contract.

One way savings were achieved was by carrying out a number of cyclic activities under the same Traffic Management, particularly on high speed roads. A number of cyclic functions were carried out all within the confines of the single lane closure including inviting District Councils to carry out their functions such as litter picking at the same time.

One of the main points of focus of the new Contract was on completing the work required to the agreed programme. Most work was delivered on time.

The new Contract had a number of mechanisms to control prices and costs year on year. These were based on the successful mechanisms included in the previous contract but using the experience of that contract they had been modified to enhance the effects.

The Price Adjustment Factor (PAF) adjusts the service prices to account for inflation and had been refined to better reflect variable cost elements used in each Service Area. For example, carriageway surfacing and administration were two of six or seven service areas where different indices reflected variable cost elements in each such as the cost of bituminous material or labour costs respectively. The PAF had led to prices being reduced in a range between -0.2% and -5.5% for 2015/16 apart from the Management Service Area which had risen by 2%.

- The Contract's Share (Pain/Gain) mechanism ensured that the contractor strives to work as efficiently as possible. The mechanism works by

comparing the actual costs to the Target Prices tendered. If actual costs for the year were less than the Target Prices then the contract was in gain. Gains were split between the contractor and County Council on a percentage basis as set out in the contract. If actual costs were more than the target prices then the contract was in pain, again shared. For the first two years of the contract the contractor was entitled to the first 2% of the gain. Any gain greater than 2% was split 50/50. If in pain, the contractor paid the Council the 2% back in full. The percentages reduced after year two, with WCC keeping more of the savings. The contractor's share for 2014/15 would be calculated next month when final costs were known.

- The Efficiency Factor mechanism helped drive down the tendered prices within the contract period should there be any gain in the contract. It did not allow any rise in prices though, should the contract be in pain. The factor was calculated by reducing the total of tendered prices by 50% of any gain achieved. Thus if £500k of gain was achieved, prices would be reduced by the equivalent of £250k in the service area(s) where the gain was made.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made.

- A member referred to tailbacks resulting from simultaneous road works on 4 or 5 arterial routes in to west Worcester and asked if Ringway were aware of the chaos caused. The Panel was advised that Ringway and every contractor responsible for road works had to apply for a road closure. The Council did try hard to minimise disruption by co-ordinating works where possible. In some situations, the Council could not refuse requests from utilities for unplanned work such as fixing a gas leak. There was a Highways Authority and Utilities Committee (HAUC) which aimed to reduce the impact of road works on the travelling public. Council officers attended and met regularly with utility companies to discuss these issues.
- A member asked who decided what length of road could be closed and what form of traffic management was used as there was a very long stretch in Astwood Bank, Redditch with a convoy system which caused considerable tailbacks. It was explained that the length of road works and type of traffic management used was highly prescriptive and depended on such

factors as the speed of vehicles, the length and width of road, as set out in Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual. For example, if a road was less than a certain width, traffic must be kept to speeds of 5mph or less and that a convoy system must be employed to guarantee this speed.

- It was reiterated that the Council co-ordinated all activity on the highway and did its best to reduce disruption.

In response to a number of questions asked by Members, the Panel was advised that:

- post highways work complaints from residents and all complaints in relation to highways works were contained in the Council's EXOR database
- the number of complaints received was a factor in relation to the Contractor's efficiency and effectiveness. There was a Performance Indicator to minimise customer complaints (linked to earning extensions to the contract)
- the Contract required a 3 year guarantee for highway works. This was unusual in that such guarantees were normally only for 12 months
- in relation to quality management and why defective work might not be picked up quickly it was explained that a Highway Engineer (not to be confused with a Highway Liaison Engineer) would be in charge of a particular project and would inspect work completed within the 3 year period (which could be quite sometime after completion)
- the contractor was expected to complete work to an appropriate standard. If, for example, a drain was covered during re-surfacing this would be picked up by the Highway Engineer, and the contractor would be responsible for putting it right
- a separate team of Safety Inspectors carried out highway safety inspections
- pothole repairs were not inspected by Highway Engineers. As part of a modern contract, to help ensure quality work, the team repairing potholes took before and after photos rather than, as had happened in the past, inspection by a clerk of works.



Other main points raised were as follows:

- some members had received numerous complaints from residents about pothole repairs popping out or breaking down after less than 6 months (and had to be re-done, sometimes more than once) and felt that quality management was not what should be expected. It was confirmed that a proper patch was guaranteed for 3 years whereas a temporary repair was not included in the guarantee. Information on the percentage of remedial works done by the contractor was not collected and was not a requirement of the contract. As complaints were received so regularly, Members asked officers to find out how many pothole repairs had to be re-done and circulate the information to the Panel
- it was confirmed that the new contract was for a minimum of 6.5 years and could be extended up to a maximum of 12.5 years. The total highways revenue budget was about £16m and the HMSC was worth around £25m to £30m overall annually. It was confirmed after the meeting that the value of the HMSC contract for cyclic and revenue work was about £11m (not £16m). Of that £11m, cyclic works took up about £4m worth of work and it was confirmed that the £850,000 saving was an annual saving on cyclic works
- the Council did not have a policy on repairing concrete roads, many of which were in urban areas built in the 1950s. Such roads were difficult to repair and little could be done other than take out the concrete and replace the road, which was very expensive. One slightly less costly method was to 'crack, seat and overlay', which involved breaking up the concrete into small pieces, bedding it down then tarmacking over the surface. This method had been used, for example, to replace the concrete sections of the M40 in 1990
- it was clear from the local press that residents were unconvinced about the need for extensive surface dressing, which left loose chippings in the road and could be a danger to cyclists, pedestrians and open topped car drivers, particularly as some drivers ignored the 20mph speed limit. It was confirmed that loose chippings were still rolled in before traffic action bedded them down. Loose chippings were normally swept away the next day and a week afterwards. Further sweepings would be

done if needed

- Members asked how best to explain to residents the benefits of surface dressing and were advised that roads could be likened to wooden window frames, which if left untreated would let in damp, go rotten and need completely replacing at a much higher cost. Replacing a road was very expensive. Sunlight attacked bitumen which went brittle and cracked, letting in water, leading to surface damage. It was much more cost effective to apply preventative measures (i.e. patch worn out areas and potholes, then treat with surface dressing) to extend the life of the road. The surface dressing sealed the road surface, keeping out the damaging effect of the water. Patching could be applied to up to 30% of a road surface. Above this, it was likely to be more cost effective to resurface. A few years ago, the Directorate had examined data going back 12 years on the cost and effects of patching and surface dressing compared to resurfacing and found that this was the most efficient and durable method of maintenance. Where possible, patching was normally done 12 months before dressing as a new patch was binder rich and less attractive to the dressing
- a member noted that the surface dressing teams worked very efficiently and seemed highly motivated and was advised that Ringway Specialist Services (a branch of Ringway) carried out the work. Surface dressing cost about £20,000 per kilometre compared to £150,000 per kilometre for resurfacing. Last year, 250km of carriage had been patched and surface dressed. For the same price, it was calculated that only 75km of carriageway re-surfacing would have been possible
- to date 49,000 gullies had been emptied. The contract required that 98% of drainage points must be working and Ringway had 2 years to ensure this. The outcome specifications were important as some gullies needed more attention than others. Each gully emptier measured how much detritus came from each gully, indicating which ones needed emptying most often. All hotspots for highway flooding were logged. If a storm warning was received, then all of these would be visited in priority order to ensure there were no blockages. Problems arose if there was a blocked spillway (or grip) or if there was a broken connection
- a member referred to an article by Charles Clover whose view was that grass verges should be left

**216 Public Satisfaction with Road Condition**

alone until they had flowered, for the benefit of bees and other wildlife. In response to a question about whether verges were cut too often in the County, it was explained that normally two cuts were required per annum, and more at junctions and areas where there were safety concerns. Large cutting machines were used on the A449 partly to avoid the need to keep going back. There were a number of sites of special environmental interest had been identified which were marked by wooden stakes, to prevent them being cut.

The Panel was advised that National Grid road works to repair gas pipes on the Bath Road had just been completed, although some road reinstatement was still needed.

The Cabinet Member for Highways, the Director of Business Environment and Community, and the Community Relations and Engagement Manager, were invited to discuss progress on how public satisfaction with the condition of roads might be improved.

As outlined in the agenda, in autumn/winter 2013/14, the Directorate investigated why public satisfaction had declined from 42% to around 31% even though road condition was being maintained or improved. The aim of the exercise was to gather objective evidence to understand the drivers of public satisfaction with road condition and identify how it might be improved either by highway service activity and/or communications campaigns.

An officer/member working group was also formed in November 2014 with the objective to review and implement cost effective ways to increase positive public perception and address the key issues identified from the Oakham Research. The group identified a number of key initiatives that could be achieved quickly to help improve satisfaction, including for example, parish makeovers, signage, white lining and improving communication about highways with district, town and parish councils. The Group also agreed that the Council would join the national Highways and Transport Survey 2015 to enable comparison with similar authorities. Further detail was outlined in the agenda at Appendix 2, including that to increase the offer of Parish Makeovers to a maximum of 20, Councillors would have the opportunity to use their local members Highways Fund.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made.

In Leicestershire, public satisfaction with road condition had been the highest in the Country at 57%, although, in line with national trends, satisfaction had fallen recently to 36%. Officers had discussed road condition and improving satisfaction with their Leicestershire colleagues and found that they were not doing anything differently. Leicestershire were interested in Worcestershire's plans to improve satisfaction. Like in this County, people in Leicestershire were mainly concerned about pot holes, quality of repair, surface condition and signage.

It should be carefully considered whether it was worth spending on improving satisfaction or whether it was better to spend on actual maintenance and black stuff.

Members noted that two of the common concerns raised by the public were parking on footways and overgrown vegetation obscuring signs. It was more difficult for the County Council to act on these as the District Councils had responsibility for parking issues and it was often landowners who were responsible for their vegetation obscuring signs.

'Thank you for your patience. Another Highways job done' signs were being displayed after prominent works had been completed in the County. These were a low cost measure to try and improve levels of satisfaction and more were planned.

Members welcomed the plans (in partnership with the LEP) to put 'Worcestershire welcomes you' signs on A roads at County boundaries although suggested that 'World Class Worcestershire welcomes you' might be more appropriate.

The last time the Panel discussed public satisfaction with roads in Worcestershire, Members felt it was important to know whether people based their judgement on satisfaction with road condition on all roads or just those in their local areas. It was felt to be subjective and depended on who was asked where. Another Member believed that residents' views on road condition were based on the locality where they lived, for example, highways work recently had improved roads in Redditch resulting in fewer complaints. It was confirmed that the focus groups set up by Oakham Research had viewed video clips of a variety of roads from across the County, not places specific to their local area (some signs had been removed to prevent the location being known).

Clear clean white lining and road signs were felt to influence the public's perception of road condition. It was

felt that road capacity was also a factor as a road might be in good condition, but drivers might feel dissatisfied with the road if stuck in congestion. Members welcomed the planned improvement work on these issues.

Members asked whether any key performance indicators were being developed to help improve public satisfaction with road condition and were advised that one being considered was the number of complaints received. To help further understand peoples' perception of road condition, post parish makeover qualitative surveys were planned (in Martley and Cookley), and, the Council was taking part in a national survey to enable comparison with other authorities nationally.

A Member felt that the common themes of concern to residents (listed on page 23 of the agenda) already showed what most affected public perception and yet the Council's computer system did not seem to be able to categorise specific types of complaint. For example, a common complaint received by members was that a pothole had been repaired, then failed or popped out within 6 months or less and had to be re-done, sometimes repeatedly. Weeds coming through the kerbside was another common complaint. It was explained that spraying weeds was a County Council responsibility carried out annually as part of the contract. A Member had been advised that parish lengthsman could not spray weeds due to issues around dangerous substances and asked for confirmation that this was the case. It was explained that there were issues around wildlife, the strength of weed killer and when it could be done. Some training would be needed for lengthsman before they could take on this work.

Very positive feedback had been received from areas which had had parish makeovers. Belbroughton Village had received a makeover on 6 June which included resurfacing a small footway, tidying up a seating area, painting a bus shelter, painting railings and fixing a pot hole in a parking area. A hand-out detailing the work carried out with before and after photos was circulated at the meeting.

It was felt that more parish makeovers would be beneficial although they should apply to all areas where there was general deterioration, not just parishes. Members were advised to contact their Highways Liaison Engineer to discuss suitable areas for makeovers in their Division.

Some areas of Worcester City had combined drain

clearing with community litter picks and it was hoped that 2 tier working and co-ordinating this type of work would be discussed further.

A Member felt that there were problems with the sequencing of traffic lights in the city such as those in Newtown Road, Lowesmoor and on London Road. It was confirmed that the sequencing of traffic lights to minimise congestion in hotspots in Worcester, including the Sebright/Wylds Lane junction on London Road was an ongoing piece of work. The local member for Nunnery asked to be kept informed of progress.

It was important to maintain or improve the County's road network. While the low cost actions listed (in Appendix 2 of the agenda item) to improve public perception were considered beneficial, Members agreed that there was no desire to shift significant funding away from highway maintenance into improving public satisfaction.

In addition, the Panel felt that sufficient information on what affected public satisfaction with road condition was already available and that it would be helpful to develop appropriate key performance indicators.

**217 Public Participation**

Mr Adrian Clark was a Member of the Worcester Transport Forum, set up by Lisa Ventura so that people could have their say on local transport issues. Mr Clark had started a petition against surface dressing on their Facebook site.

He asked why problems with the Ketch roundabout had not been foreseen at the design stage. There was a very short slip road with two lanes into one going south onto the Carrington Bridge, causing drivers to cut in. There were no traffic barriers to prevent head on collisions with oncoming traffic and there had been several near misses as evidenced by the YouTube video posted on Councillor Tom Wells' Facebook page. Whittington roundabout had also caused problems for drivers and he was seeking an explanation on why the roundabouts were designed the way they were.

**218 Ketch Roundabout**

The recent public concerns about the Ketch Roundabout were raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 8 June 2015. Given the public interest, the Board asked this Panel to look into the issue at its next meeting. The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Skills and Infrastructure and the Director of Business, Environment and Community were therefore invited to discuss the issue.

The Cabinet Member began by setting the context and explaining why the Council was doing things the way it was. The A4440 from Whittington to Powick roundabout was the most congested route in the County with 30,000 vehicle movements per day, holding back growth in the County and affecting the city's economy and environment. The plan was to dual the entire stretch.

The Carrington and City Centre Bridges were the only two river crossings for traffic in Worcester and improving performance (traffic flow) on the Southern Link part of the A4440 was of key importance. The work had to be done in phases when funding became available. The first phase was the Whittington roundabout at a cost of about £1.7m. The second phase was the Ketch roundabout enlargement and dualling from the Norton roundabout to the Ketch at a cost of over £8m (£6m of funding came from Government with £2m from the local authority). The third phase was to dual from the Norton roundabout to the Whittington roundabout at a cost of £33m. This included enlarging the Norton Roundabout and enabling the Whittington roundabout slip road (turning left coming from the M5 towards Malvern) to 'plug in' to the new dual carriageway. Work on phase 3 was due to start in the Autumn and should be finished by 2018. The fourth phase was to dual the entire stretch from the Ketch to Powick roundabout. Funding was still being sought from central Government.

The dualling of the Southern Link Road was linked to joint Development Plans for housing, schools, and shopping for the districts of Worcester City, Wychavon and Malvern Hills as well as linked to the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). It was planned to build around 2,000 properties on the land between Norton and the Ketch.

The Director explained that Worcestershire Highways was a collaboration of Worcestershire County Council staff and its Highways Contractor. Worcestershire's road safety record was comparatively good compared to other local authorities. There had been an 18% reduction in those killed or seriously injured on roads in Worcestershire over the last few years.

The Council was not in denial about some technical aspects of the design of the Ketch roundabout. The Director had seen the video of near misses, and wished to thank the public for the speed of their reaction and apologised to all those who had had unsettling

experiences on the merge lane going onto the Carrington Bridge. Immediate safety action had been taken which resulted in the coning off of the right hand approach lane and accelerating the safety audit (now completed). The safety audit recently carried out revealed that a merge into uphill traffic should be avoided. By 13<sup>th</sup> June, the issues had been resolved by removing the merge lane onto the Carrington Bridge and removing the straight ahead arrows from the right hand lane on the approach from Norton.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were made.

The Directorate had authorised an independent investigation into issues with the Ketch roundabout and could not go into further details at this meeting. Problems with the design might seem obvious with the benefit of hindsight, however it was not as simple as asking who signed off the design. There was a much more collaborative approach and the designs would have passed through various stages. Highway design was very prescriptive and had to comply with design manuals. 3D (rather than 2D) driveability modelling would have been beneficial and could prevent similar problems from happening again. Driveability testing was an area for potential improvement in future and was being looked at by Government.

The concept of the road and roundabout designs was to improve capacity although all the benefits would not be felt until the whole project was complete. It was not ideal merging two lanes into one although there were areas in the County where this seemed to work. The new Ketch roundabout had led to increased capacity. A bigger roundabout increased gapping opportunities for traffic getting on to the roundabout by about 5%. East/west traffic was flowing quicker although there was less improvement for north/south traffic.

A member who had previously mentioned at Council how well construction teams had worked and how well traffic had been managed during the Ketch roundabout project, asked why engineers did not foresee the problems for drivers. It was reiterated that this would form part of an investigation (by an independent engineering firm) and the outcomes would be made public.

The Ketch roundabout had caused problems for drivers for a couple of weeks after it first opened and a member was concerned that the Council had only taken action



after Councillor Tom Wells had publicised drivers' difficulties on a YouTube video. The Cabinet Member's personal view was that the roundabout had been opened a little too early.

Members asked why the right hand lane approaching the Ketch roundabout (from Norton) could not have right turn arrows and be solely for traffic turning right. It was explained that the Design Manual (2008) did not allow right turn arrows in such circumstances due to the danger of foreign lorry drivers turning right before going round the roundabout. Only straight ahead arrows or words for the destination could be used. The original straight ahead arrows had been removed and replaced with destination words.

Now that the merge lane onto the Carrington Bridge had been hatched out, Members felt that drivers would still have problems being forced to merge from 2 lanes into one earlier, although understood that the risks would be lessened. The Panel was advised that the junction would be monitored and there may be further minor adjustments if necessary.

A Member asked, as traffic was at a standstill in peak times, might it be better to have a single lane up to the Whittington roundabout. The Panel was advised that the work to increase capacity would not work completely as intended until the whole project was completed. The enlarged roundabouts would minimise the need to tinker with the scheme later on. It was most important to ensure driver safety and learn lessons which could be applied to future projects. During off-peak times, traffic was currently flowing more quickly than would be anticipated when the whole project was complete.

A Member was pleased to hear that the Council had reacted quickly to safety concerns and asked how much the resulting changes would negate the increased capacity. The Panel was advised that there would be some impact although, only when all elements of the development were complete, would the roundabout designs and traffic flow be optimised.

The local MP Robin Walker had raised the need for dualling the route at a recent debate on transport in Parliament. The Government's Transport Secretary had visited the Carrington Bridge and the Council was hoping for Government investment of £60m to £70m to complete the job.

The County Councillor for Powick highlighted a number of issues and asked a number of questions during which the following main points were made:

- the Councillor believed that the merge lane onto the Carrington Bridge was shorter than was set out in design manuals and that the risk of head on collisions at the Ketch roundabout had been of greater concern than at the Whittington roundabout. His view was that the roundabout had been opened without adequate safety checks. He asked why, for example, had lamp posts been incorrectly positioned in front of a safety fence (which had subsequently been removed)
- some drivers had written to the Council within the first 2 weeks of the opening of the Ketch roundabout outlining their concerns about safety and had received responses that these were just 'teething problems'. The Councillor had understood from design manuals that a 3<sup>rd</sup> Stage Safety Audit should be done when the road came into use. In response it was explained that a Stage 2 Safety Audit had been carried out previously which had identified issues with the merge lane. The Directorate's usual practice was to split the Stage 3 Safety Audit into parts 3a and 3b. This was the custom and practice of road engineers and would be considered as part of the investigation
- on the approach from the river, flashing signs warning of adverse camber on the roundabout were, he believed, not placed in accordance with the design manual as it was understood there should be forward visibility ahead. It was explained that the safety audit had identified some pitching of high sided vehicles and that the warning signs were there mainly to mitigate a point of note
- the Councillor asked, given that the Council was commissioning services, whether the Directorate had sufficient capability to oversee the construction and design on such large projects. It was explained that the County Council had been outsourcing highway design contracts for at least the last 12 or 13 years. The Council did not design roundabouts but it did have a responsibility in relation to the safety function
- the Council retained responsibility for highways and it was the personal view of the Councillor that the roundabout was not a good design. He asked what quality assurance the company which designed

the roundabout had in place and was advised that this would be considered as part of the independent investigation

- the YouTube video on the Councillors' Facebook page had received over 83,000 hits and 1400 people had signed a petition

The Local Member for St Peters felt differently, having received only 2 emails from the 2,500 local residents in his Division, one on the first day the roundabout opened and another sometime later. He did not wish the strategy to be confused with the tactics. Dualling was a good strategy although some of the tactics to achieve it may not have been quite right. There were clearly some issues with the Ketch roundabout, most of which had already been resolved. There was no point in saying now that the road should have been dualled when first planned as discussed back in the 1980s. It was important to get on with the next phase.

Local residents were on the whole pleased with the construction work and with the bunds put in place to reduce noise. It was important that lessons were learned so that similar problems did not arise during the next phase. A clear proposition needed to be put to Government for funding in the Autumn.

The meeting ended at 4.35 pm

Chairman .....