

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel **Wednesday, 8 May 2019, County Hall, Worcester - 10.00 am**

Minutes

Present:

Mr A A J Adams (Chairman), Mr G R Brookes,
Mr B Clayton, Mr P Denham (Vice Chairman),
Mr M E Jenkins, Mr A D Kent and Ms C M Stalker

Also attended:

Mr A T Amos, Cabinet Member with responsibility for
Highways
Mr S J Mackay
Lyndon Bracewell, Push Bike and Cycle UK
Robin Walker, Cycle Evesham Vale

Nigel Hudson (Head of Strategy and Infrastructure),
Andy Baker (Transport Planning & Commissioning
Manager), Martin Rowe (Transport Strategy Team
Leader), Sally Everest (Network Control Manager),
Nick Churchill (Congestion traffic Manager), Lynsey Keir
(Transport Infrastructure Commissioning & Project Office
Manager), Matthew Fung (Public Health Consultant),
Samantha Morris (Scrutiny Co-ordinator) and
Emma James (Overview and Scrutiny Officer)

Available Papers

The members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated);
- B. Presentation handouts for Item 6 (circulated at the Meeting)
- C. The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 March 2019 (previously circulated).

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

332 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies had been received from Panel member James O'Donnell, from Tony Miller, Cabinet Member for Environment and from Ken Pollock, Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that Agenda items 5 (Cycling) and 6 (Congestion) would be swapped around, since there was an external speaker present for the discussion on congestion, and this item may also provide context for the discussion on cycling.

333 Declarations of

None.

	Interest and of any Party Whip	
334	Public Participation	None.
335	Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting	The Minutes of the meeting on 5 March 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
336	Progress with Reducing Congestion and How to Improve getting around Worcestershire	<p>In attendance for this item were:</p> <p>Jim Bradley, Director, Integrated Transport Planning Ltd</p> <p><u>The Council:</u> Nigel Hudson, Head of Strategic Infrastructure & Economy Andy Baker, Transport Planning and Commissioning Manager Martin Rowe, Transport Strategy Team Leader Nick Churchill, Congestion Traffic Manager Lynsey Keir, Transport Infrastructure Commissioning & Project Office Manager Matthew Fung, Public Health Consultant</p> <p>Cllr Alan Amos, Cabinet Member for Highways</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed the external expert on congestion, who had been invited by officers to set the context for the discussion by providing information about best practice and examples of what was working elsewhere.</p> <p><u>Understanding and Managing Traffic Congestion in Worcestershire – Integrated Transport Planning Ltd (ITP)</u></p> <p>Jim Bradley from sustainable transport consultants Integrated Transport Planning Ltd, gave a presentation (available on the website here) which included an overview of congestion, trends in Worcestershire, considerations for policy makers, good practice and options for managing demand for road space in Worcestershire. The ITP Director explained that his experience and views were based on studies to understand and manage transport planning and he had been involved in transport planning for cities such as London and Nottingham as well as smaller towns of a similar size to Worcester. Worcestershire was an area</p>

with which he was very familiar, having grown up in nearby Warwickshire.

During the presentation the following main points were made:

- Traffic congestion occurred as road network use increased and was characterised by slower speeds, longer travel times and increased vehicular queuing.
- Common measures of congestion related to the physical progress of vehicles through the network in comparison to 'free flow' time.
- It was important to consider the public's perception of congestion and how it impacted on daily life.
- Delay in journey time was one measure used to measure congestion and in 2018 the average delay across roads managed by Worcestershire County Council (rural and urban) was estimated to be 29.4 seconds per vehicle per mile compared to free flow, which represented a 7% increase on 2015 figures.
- Speed was another measure used, and in 2018 the average speed across the County (rural and urban Council-managed roads) was estimated to be 31.5 miles per hour, representing a 2% decrease on 2015 figures.
- The impact of increasing congestion on the Local Transport Plan 2018-30 (LTP4) objectives was set out:
 - Supporting economic competitiveness and growth – congestion costs businesses money, damaged reputation of towns and constrained planned development growth
 - Limiting the impacts of transport on the environment – congestion meant falling traffic speeds increased NOx emissions and made streets unpleasant places for walking and cycling
 - Optimising equality of opportunity for all citizens – congestion delayed bus services (17% of residents have no access to a car and it was believed that around a third of young people did not drive) and created conflict with non-motorised road users
 - Improving safety, health, life expectancy – congestion increased traffic accidents, incidences of pollution related health issues and challenged promotion of healthy lifestyles through active travel
 - Enhancing quality of life for residents –

congestion increased time spent travelling thereby reducing available personal time and created less pleasant environments for residents.

- Three key principles included:
 - The causes of congestion – the Panel was shown a pie chart, which indicated that the main factors in 2015 were recurrent demand (55%) and excess demand (16%)
 - The concept of ‘induced demand’ – it was not possible to build your way out of congestion since building more roads leads to increased usage
 - Most efficient road space utilisation – it was not possible to display the video clip which showed 5 modes of transport with 200 people each, with those in cars crossing the line in the slowest time because of congestion.
- Options for managing demand for road space in Worcestershire centred on parking management, supporting commercial bus services, investment in cycling and walking and behaviour change programmes.
- A list of all-day parking charges for comparator towns showed that charges in Worcestershire were the lowest, and that the cost of a daily network bus ticket was higher than the parking charge in Worcester and Malvern, and the same as in Droitwich, Evesham and Pershore – plentiful, low cost parking incentivised car use and did not incentivise bus use.
- An example of parking management highlighted as good practice was Nottingham where a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) had been introduced so that employers with 11 or more parking spaces were charged £380 per space. The levy was not applied to shoppers, occasional business users or Blue Badge holders and grants were available to businesses to encourage reduction in workplace parking, for example through cycling grants for showers and cycle facilities. The levy disincentivised commuter car use and had raised £44m in revenue, ring-fenced by law to spend on the NET tram network, electric bus network and railway station redevelopment.
- Bus provision in Worcestershire was at a critical point since services were becoming less commercially viable. Bus priority measures were patchy with buses having to queue in traffic, resulting in reduced operating speeds and

increased passenger dissatisfaction. Therefore, the majority of the commercial network interurban network was now operating at marginal viability, with attrition inevitable unless bold decisions were made to reverse the trend.

- An example of good practice in bus support was Brighton and Hove Council, which had implemented a pro-bus policy over the past 20 years, resulting in the number of bus journeys doubling by 2012/13.
- Demand for cycling in the county was currently low, particularly in rural areas
- An example of good practice in cycling was Transport for London, where successive mayors had invested significantly in initiatives to promote it, resulting in an increase in cycling by over 130% between 2000 and 2016. Road space had been given to cyclists, which had impacted on congestion, however in the long-term this situation would rectify itself by measures to discourage people to drive.
- Regarding behaviour change, the 2005-2009 award of £3.52million to Worcester as a Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town was referred to, which had been used to showcase the role of 'soft measures' in reducing traffic by promoting walking, cycling and public transport. The *Choose How You Move* campaign also encouraged a switch to sustainable travel modes and a 10% reduction in car use, however the programme was not sustained due to austerity measures.
- Examples of good practice in behaviour change included the 'Thinktravel' project which targeted 30,000 households in Gloucester and Tewkesbury and achieved a 7% reduction in single occupancy car journeys and a shift towards sharing, walking and cycling, particularly to local shops.
- Travel planning was known to work and could really help in Worcestershire.
- In summary, congestion in Worcestershire was worsening and represented a critical challenge to LTP delivery, as well as affecting residents' health, environment and quality of life. There were three stages of transport policy evolution, which shifted from a focus on vehicles, to personal movement and on to activity/quality of life. In his view, Worcestershire's focus was too much on the vehicle. Therefore, any future Strategy for congestion should focus on shifting to the next stage; moving people not vehicles, through areas

such as parking management, bus support, cycling and walking and behaviour change.

The Chairman invited questions on the ITP presentation and the following main points were raised:

- The ITP Director confirmed that the delay and average speed figures quoted for WCC managed roads related to data supplied by the Department for Transport, which was collected nationally and segregated locally, and was freely available to ITP.
- When asked about average journey length, the ITP Director did not have this information but pointed out that delays could be significantly more on roads around main urban settlements such as the A44.
- Panel Members pointed out that the Government's policy on electric vehicles and investment locally from councils such as Bromsgrove, would have an impact, however the ITP Director pointed out that whilst this would impact on emissions, it would not necessarily reduce congestion.
- A Member referred to improvements in Worcestershire such as his work to try and encourage car sharing within his area, and the ITP Director agreed that changing people's behaviour to carshare was really important, although not the overall solution.
- Regarding a Councillor's query about any cost and environmental impact of manufacturing and disposing of electric car batteries. It was agreed that information would be provided after the meeting.
- A Panel Member asked about congestion charges, which he feared would contribute to the decline of the economy of town centres. The ITP Director advised that this was not something he would recommend in Worcestershire at this stage; introduction of a charge in London was very different since it was densely populated and had a great public transport system, although the city was starting to see congestion levels increase again.
- Panel Members discussed the merits of increasing parking charges, with one Member believing that the use of town centres would decline, whereas another Member referred to successful examples elsewhere and suggested that it was a question of getting the balance right.
- Concerning Nottingham's Workplace Parking Levy, a Member queried the impact on already

pressurised small businesses and pointed out that Nottingham was a larger town with a huge out of centre university, which generated demand for public transport. The ITP Director pointed out that economic growth continued in Nottingham, and although he agreed it was a bigger city, the example was intended to show good practice. He confirmed that the majority of public transport there was now viable and the tram network was a commercial service.

- Another Member queried how a levy would work in towns like Redditch, with no council-owned car parks and raised the potential impact of people parking outside residents' homes rather than paying to park
- A Member pointed out that while he appreciated the message from ITP, he was less clear how to make it viable for Worcestershire, however another Member pointed out that the ITP had been invited to set out examples of good practice and it would be up to the Council how these could be adapted for Worcestershire's own needs.
- Regarding the Brighton and Hove pro-bus policy, a Member pointed out the importance of having full figures, since the increase in bus journeys may be attributed to population increase and the ITP Director advised that population had increased but had not doubled.
- The ITP Director pointed out that although some aspects of the good practice examples had involved significant investment, there were other possible solutions.
- A Member asked whether the *Choose How You Move* programme had been discontinued due to austerity or perceived lack of benefit, and the Head of Strategic Infrastructure & Economy reported that it was a question of funding, but it had been a very good programme, and that subsequently there had been a massive shift back to car use since if people were left to their own devices, car use was often the more convenient choice.
- A Member referred to the addition of real time bus service information in Redditch, which had had a positive impact.
- A Member suggested that social media could play a key role in reducing the cost of schemes to change behaviour, which everyone agreed.
- A Panel Member pointed out that road infrastructure needed to reflect the fact that a high proportion of journeys in Worcestershire were

people travelling through the County. It seemed that countries abroad were better at building roads to by-pass towns and without these, the lives of villagers were greatly affected by busier roads. The ITP Director said that a balanced approach was important, however congestion from increased population would continue and new roads were very expensive, whereas money could be invested in other solutions – the Member reiterated his view that some new roads were needed.

- A Member flagged up the need to educate from the outset and that no single solution would work for Worcestershire's towns.
- It was agreed that vehicle emissions were a very concerning issue.
- Linking car and rail travel was suggested as an area of need.
- When asked, the ITP Director acknowledged the role of park and ride facilities, although he understood that onward travel had been a problem around the Worcester site.
- Members flagged up the need for more joined up working between district and county councils and were advised that Nottinghamshire was an area where they worked well together in this respect.
- When asked whether increasing capacity at road junctions also attracted more use, the ITP Director said that it did, but that nonetheless there was a role for traffic management.
- The Panel Chairman commented that Worcestershire had a unique range of problems, being predominantly rural, with lots of commuters and a lack of public transport to most villages, therefore small communities tended to be car reliant, although a proportion of older and young people did not drive. Community transport was part of the solution and a lot of things were happening such as more working from home, and purchase of electric cars. The solutions for Worcestershire could not necessarily stem from London or Nottingham and needed to be suitable for Worcestershire.

The Council's Work on Congestion

The Council's Transport Planning and Commissioning Manager was invited to comment on the Worcestershire Network Efficiency Programme (WNEP) and in particular, to activity around rail travel, the Bromsgrove corridor and consideration of car

parking capacity at railway stations.

The Worcestershire Parkway Station was felt to be a game changer, with hourly trains from Cardiff to Nottingham and it was hoped to improve connections with Gloucestershire.

The next phase of the Worcestershire Network Efficiency Programme would include the A38 at Upton, the A449 (Hoobrook), Evesham and Bromsgrove. Other important areas of work focused on walking and cycling and about offering choice.

The Council's Transport and Commissioning Manager recognised the importance of the toolbox of measures set out by the ITP Director.

In order to demonstrate work being carried out around congested junctions, the Congestion Traffic Manager showed the Panel a series of photos. Such work took a balanced approach, improving pinch points and journey times whilst managing speed and residents' needs on the routes in question. It was important to use resources to greatest effect and an important part of the work was to enable cycling and walking, not just traffic flow.

The Chairman invited questions and the following main points were raised:

- It was confirmed that all schemes referred to were included in LTP4, which was a requirement of the Council.
- A Panel Member flagged up residents' impatience about completion of schemes for seemingly simple work, and when asked about completion of current traffic management schemes, the Panel was advised that Traffic Regulation Order requirements meant that the process generally took between 5-10 months, and longer where parking was being reviewed.
- It was confirmed that so far there had been a pattern of reviewing the Council's LTP every five years, however it was up to the Council to choose when to review, and this would be influenced by factors such as new large developments. The LTP was a long-term plan up to 2030 and any schemes which had not been delivered would be carried forward.
- The Head of Strategy and Infrastructure pointed out that Officers were continually

looking at funding opportunities and how they fit with current and future schemes.

- When asked about smart traffic control which detected traffic flow and adjusted traffic lights, the Network Control Manager advised that this worked best on major routes.
- The Network Control Manager highlighted the exciting potential of using artificial intelligence and data from mobile phones to manage traffic flow.
- When asked how the LTP adjusted to outside influences and the impact of schemes, Officers agreed it was very important to ensure the Plan remained relevant.
- The Network Control Manager undertook to contact Cllr Kent after the meeting regarding use of speed cameras.
- A Member flagged up the need for a more strategic approach to managing car parks in Worcester and the Transport Strategy Team Leader explained that it was possible to manage effectively, and the important thing was to distinguish between short and long-stay parking. Increasing charges for long-stay would encourage people to consider alternatives.
- When asked about congestion solutions for Evesham which had been subject to much debate, Officers advised that the information available indicated that congestion there was caused by local people, and that low parking charges led people to use the car for short trips. One approach could be to look at short and long-term parking, together with encouraging behaviour change to deter car use for short journeys.
- A Member suggested the new Worcestershire Parkway rail station could be part of a park and ride system, however was advised that rail parking required different pricing approaches because it tended to be very attractive and would probably be higher than a level which would attract use as a park and ride, although this was not to say the site couldn't be considered in the future.

Comment was invited from the Public Health Consultant present, who spoke about a partnership being set up to look at air quality. He pointed out the importance of the healthcare sector as an employer, which could form part of the solution for Worcestershire's congestion in looking

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at the root causes of congestion.

In attendance for this item were:

The Council:

Nigel Hudson, Head of Strategic Infrastructure & Economy

Andy Baker, Transport Planning and Commissioning Manager

Martin Rowe, Transport Strategy Team Leader

Lynsey Keir, Transport Infrastructure Commissioning & Project Office Manager

Matthew Fung, Public Health Consultant

Cllr Alan Amos, Cabinet Member for Highways

Cycling Group representatives:

Lyndon Bracewell - Push Bike! (Chairman) and Cycle UK (Chairman of local branch)

Robin Walker - Cycle Evesham Vale (Chair)

The Transport Planning and Commissioning Manager referred to the information included in the Agenda report, which set out the national context for cycling and funding sources. Examples of external funding were two bids to the Department for Transport's National Productivity Investment Fund for Worcester and Bromsgrove, which secured £3.2 and £3.4 million (respectively).

The Government was encouraging local authorities to increase investment in cycling and walking infrastructure to 15% of total transport infrastructure spending. The Government's Transport Analysis Guidance (WebTAG) meant that the Council had a better chance of obtaining funding with a package of measures in place.

The report also updated the Panel on cycling events which continued to be very popular as well as bringing economic benefit, with the result that the Council's financial contribution to events was reducing.

The Transport Infrastructure Commissioning and Project Office Manager explained her role as overseeing a Team responsible for work with walking and cycling and referred to the work taking place (Appendix 1). Revenue was key because whilst infrastructure was being put into place, it was not being promoted very well. Nonetheless, a lot had been achieved over the past 20 years including both big and small schemes such as cycle bridges, improvements to cycle ways, using S106 monies, safety measures, signing and use of the riverside. Solutions

were often low key and cost effective and facilitating cycling improved people's health and attracted visitors.

The Officer highlighted the information included in the Report, including cycle schemes progressed during 2018/19, what had worked well and new schemes for 2019/20. Moving forward, work would focus on the Strategy as well as the schemes involved in getting a cycling network in Worcestershire and making the most of S106 funds. Many schemes were small but intrinsic to the overall plan.

The Chairman invited questions and the following main points were raised:

- The Chairman congratulated the Officers and Cabinet Member present on the long list of cycling schemes which was an increase on the previous year.
- When asked about grants in this area, the Officers advised that the active corridors were spread across the County and that new bids focussed on cycling and walking.
- A Member asked about district councils' plans and development and was advised that LTP4 was built very much around planned development and that new development plans had to include cycling and walking plans. Regarding the Active Travel network, more challenging negotiation could be involved since the Council's powers were not the same as for the highways network.

The cycling group representatives present were invited to provide feedback on cycling in Worcestershire.

Lyndon Bracewell from Cycle UK and Pushbike! made the point that cyclists needed to travel from one point to another, and in Worcester some provision was fragmented so that cyclists had to dismount from their bikes. His suggestion was to focus resources on Active Travel routes which gave maximum benefit, as well as on safer routes to schools and businesses to aid congestion. The sports and leisure aspects of cycling would take care of themselves. There was a perception that cycling was dangerous when in fact research showed it was no more dangerous than gardening.

Robin Walker from Cycle Evesham Vale appreciated the ambitions of LTP4, and the work on the Active Travel Corridor was very exciting. Intentions for a network around towns was welcomed. He would like to see

promotion of cycling and walking actually happen and understood that Herefordshire was still using the 'Choose How you Move' campaign with success. Investment was needed, not just S106 monies and while he was surprised to hear that 10% of the Highways budget had been used on cycling and walking, he reiterated the need for a specific cycling budget. Congestion was terrible, for example into Evesham and it was crucial to accelerate access to Active Travel which would also reduce emissions.

Further Panel points made were:

- The cyclist representatives were asked for any comments on shared use of space with pedestrians and the perception that cycling was dangerous to them. The Cycle UK representative said that taking Worcester as an example, he was only aware of one incident reported although he accepted there may be more. His view was that this was a perception rather than a reality and may stem from the anti-social behaviour of some younger cyclists, which he felt was more of a policing issue.
- The Cycle UK representative pointed out that he cycled because he wanted to but was aware he was very committed.
- A Member asked whether road markings were a big part of the solution and was advised that Officers took the opportunity to review the road maintenance programme.
- The Panel Chairman referred to the Government's suggestion that 15% of a Council's Transport budget should be dedicated to cycling and walking, when the report gave the amount spent by Worcestershire (as a percentage of total transport infrastructure spending) averaged 10%. When asked whether the 10% included S106 funds, the Officers advised that without S106 the figure was 4-6% for walking and cycling.
- The Panel Chairman reminded the Panel that it had previously recommended a cycling specific budget, which the CMR for Highways had addressed during a meeting of Council.
- A Member asked what follow up took place to gauge the take up of cycle schemes and was advised that this was important, although was often a case of resources.
- Cllr Kent would welcome the opportunity to see work being done on older cycling routes in Wythall, which the Officers were happy to

facilitate.

- Panel Members acknowledged the interesting perceptions around cycling and considered how these could be changed. The Officers said that they were considering what worked best for different routes, but a change in behaviour was important since adding a road marking and a sign to indicate a cycling route, was not the full solution. The Transport Infrastructure Commissioning & Project Office Manager was clear that promoting cycling was a cheap way to impact on congestion and therefore she felt it important not just to rely on S106 monies.
- The increasing popularity of electric bikes was raised, which could be particularly good for older people.
- A Member highlighted the importance of cycling as a building block in tackling congestion.
- A Member praised the level of pothole repairs in Worcestershire which also facilitated cyclists and pointed out that cycling would be affected should this budget be reduced. The Representative from Cycle Evesham Vale said that Worcestershire's roads were better than elsewhere.

The Panel Chairman could see that cycling was a key area being developed across the County and asked Members to consider any key points or recommendations for Cabinet, for example regarding spend.

The Panel recommended publicity to promote active routes from home to school, which would reduce congestion. The need to address perceptions around safety was also stressed. The scope of social media was highlighted in such publicity.

The Panel was interested to know more about the role played by S106 in relation to cycling and the Officers would provide a summary.

Comment was invited from the Public Health Officer present, who advised that an electric bike hire scheme was in hand and that promoting cycling may involve the Council thinking about how things could be done differently and not just what was spent.

Regarding the Panel's July discussion of traffic calming, the Scrutiny Officers were asked to request information on cost of average speed cameras and how revenue could be put back locally.

The Chairman reminded members that the July meeting would be an opportunity to refresh the work programme and members were asked to consider topics across the Panel's remit which should be emailed to the Scrutiny Officers. Additionally, all Councillors had been invited to put forward suggestions to the overall scrutiny work programme.

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm

Chairman