



NORWICH HIGHWAYS AGENCY COMMITTEE

10.00 a.m. – 11.25 a.m.

24 June 2010

Present:	County Councillors:	City Councillors:
	Adams (Chair) (V)	Bremner (V)
	Gunson) (V)	Read
	Bearman	Lubbock

*(V) – Voting Member

Apologies: County Councillors Scutter and Shaw, County Councillor Spratt – (substitute for Councillor Shaw) and City Councillor Morrey (other Council business)

1. PUBLIC QUESTION

Earlham Road Pedestrian Crossing

Mr Terry O'Shea asked the following question:-

'The vast majority of local residents support a zebra crossing. My wife and I have three children under the age of three and strongly support a crossing. However, regarding the decision to adopt Scheme 2 rather than Scheme 1 of the Earlham Road zebra crossing:

- (a) Why was the second consultation smaller than the first, despite a quite different proposal being made and a different question being asked? My understanding is that local council members did not expect this to be the case.
- (b) Why were some local residents who responded to the first consultation not consulted in the second, contrary to assurances made?
- (c) Why were local people given a clear choice between Scheme 1 and 2 only for their preference to be disregarded? It appears to be both undemocratic and expensive. Many residents feel deeply let down by the Council regarding this. The letter residents received from the Council clearly stated that the decision between Scheme 1 and 2 would be made by local residents, given councillors could not decide - there was no favoured scheme as far as the Council was concerned. This was the basis on which residents responded but this now seems to have been disregarded. Although it is now claimed that it was never intended to be

a 'straight vote' this is precisely what the Council wrote and offered. How can this be good practice?

- (d) The new notice of 28 May 2010 is factually incorrect, in that it states that the only change is the movement of the crossing, when in fact the changes are far more extensive. Why was this invalid notice issued?
- (e) Has any study been made of traffic movements from the Earlham Shops and flats exit onto the Earlham Road? The proposed Scheme 2 is dangerous due to the Council failing to appreciate how busy and dangerous the exit onto the Earlham Road shops from the Earlham shops and flats is. This busy junction will have to be crossed by pedestrians going to Recreation Road School using the crossing (which would not have been the case with the earlier proposal) as cars attempt to turn out onto the busy Earlham Road too close to the crossing. This junction has seen frequent car accidents and school children and the elderly will be at risk with the new proposal. This junction is far, far busier than the entrance to the Cemetery, particularly after school and at weekends. The new crossing proposed is unsafe as it is far too close to this busy and dangerous junction.
- (f) Local residents are well aware of this issue and prefer the much safer original positioning in Scheme 1. There is already a local problem with a zebra crossing on the Earlham Road, too close to the junctions with Park Lane and Alexandra Road, being ignored by drivers. Will the Norwich Highways Agency Committee undertake to examine whether it is safe to have a zebra crossing so close to the exit from Earlham Road shops and flats?
- (g) Does the Norwich Highways Agency Committee believe it is safe to have two bus stops virtually opposite on the narrow Earlham Road, particularly as buses attempt to pull out as cars are overtaking them which are a frequent occurrence?
- (h) Given these important facts, of which it may well have been unaware, will the Norwich Highways Agency Committee examine again the decision to adopt the flawed Scheme 2 rather than locally-chosen Scheme 1?

(Printed copies of the question were circulated at the meeting.)

Mr O'Shea then expressed concern about the democratic accountability of the consultation and that he considered that the views of the public had been disregarded.

The Transportation Manager, Norwich City Council, said that letters had been sent to the owners of properties directly affected by the crossing and to all consultees who had responded to the previous consultations. Among these there were 23 responses in favour of scheme 2 and 13 received responses in favour of scheme 1, which gave a clear mandate for the original consultation response in favour of option 2. Eleven additional responses were received from people who had not been directly contacted all of whom supported option 1, giving a total of 24 in support of option 1 and 23 for option 2. Officers' used their professional judgement to recommend option 2 as it was the safer of the two options. The street notice was a legal document and there was no requirement to state that the bus shelter would be moved. There had been a full traffic impact study on both options. The location of the bus stops on opposite sides of the road was not an issue as the one on the south was in a lay-by and therefore even if both stops were in use then the road would not be blocked.

Nothing Mr O'Shea had raised at the meeting required a re-examination of the members' decision to implement option 2.

Mr O'Shea then addressed the committee and outlined his concerns about the majority of Earham Road residents supporting option 1 and questioning the validity of the consultation. The travel plan for Recreation Road Infant School had identified the need for a crossing but it needed to be conveniently sited and safe, and not near the wide junction as in scheme 2.

Discussion ensued in which the Chair suggested that the committee undertook a site visit. Plans of both schemes were displayed at the meeting. Members were advised that there had been a public consultation meeting and that the layout for scheme 2 had come out of the site meeting with the design engineer and Councillor Ramsay, a councillor for the Ward. The construction of the scheme was due to start on 16 August 2010 and delay would mean that the crossing could not be built until after Christmas.

Councillor Ramsay, Ward Councillor for Nelson Ward, said that local residents had strong views about the crossing with a number of people not wanting a crossing at all and others who had favoured option 1 in the first consultation favouring option 2 in the second one. The views of people outside the area had also to be taken into account.

The Chair suggested that a site meeting would not be practical as it would cause delays when a crossing was necessary on safety grounds.

The Chair moved and Councillor Gunson seconded that the committee confirmed the decision to support scheme 2, it was:

RESOLVED with 2 members voting in favour (Councillors Adams and Gunson) and 2 members abstaining (Councillors Bremner and Read) to confirm the decision to implement scheme 2.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2010.

3. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORWICH CITY AGENCY 2009/2010

Discussion ensued in which the Head of Transport and Landscape, Norwich City Council, together with the Transportation Manager, answered members' questions.

Members sought reassurance that the speed limit of 30mph on Newmarket Road was being monitored by officers and that the police would be advised if there was an issue. Members considered that speeding was particularly a problem in the evenings and there was concern that buses using the bus lane that were not required to stop, such as park and ride buses and coaches, were exceeding the speed limit. Councillor Lubbock referred to comments from residents who could not understand why the bus lane operated out of core hours, such as Sundays, and said that this was a case of putting in the infrastructure ahead of future expansion of bus services.

Councillor Bearman referred to the traffic signal upgrades and asked why not all traffic signals were being upgraded to benefit pedestrians and cyclists and requested that the Urban Traffic Unit looked at the delay for pedestrians as some signals were longer than others. Members were advised that the programme was moving forward. Some traffic signals were still on the old system and needed upgrading.

Members then discussed the statement that City Council officers were looking to develop a more proactive approach rather than reacting to petitions and approaches from members of a small number of people for improvement programmes. The publication of service standards would provide clear guidance of what could or could not be provided. Discussion then ensued on a shared approach to school travel plans and schools working with Civil Enforcement Officers to deal with car parking. Members also considered that there were consequences from school travel plans and that there needed to be more community involvement with other residents.

Members also noted the reduction in casualty statistics.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Report and note its key messages as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

4. NORFOLK AUDIT SERVICES AND NORWICH CITY COUNCIL AUDIT AND CONSUTANCY SERVICES JOINT ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010 ON THE NORWICH HIGHWAYS AGENCY JOINT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED, having considered joint report of the Head of Finance, Norfolk County Council, and the Head of Finance, Norwich City Council, to note:--

- (1) the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2009/2010 and the key message:

Based on an analysis of the audit work carried out and reports issued, Internal Audit can assure Committee that, the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control and risk management during 2009/2010 was acceptable.

- (2) that the systems of internal audit are adequate and effective during 2009-10 for the purpose of the latest regulations, subject to the City Council's completion of the action plan to address internal audit's non compliance with auditing standards;
- (3) the content of the 2010/11 audit plan from the Internal Audit Annual Plan and that the risks of fraud and corruption have been reviewed in light of the economic downturn and resources are considered adequate for 2009/10 and planned for 2010/11;
- (4) that internal audit work continues to evolve to cover all areas of risk as well as traditional financial audit: Audit planning is partly based upon risk assessments and therefore internal audit is auditing higher risk areas;
- (5) that action plans are in place to strengthen the matters reported by the Audit Commission during the year.

5. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2009/2010

RESOLVED, having considered the joint report of the Director of Environmental, Transport and Development, Norfolk County Council, and Director of Regeneration and Development, Norwich City Council, to note:-

- (1) the requirements for an annual governance statement and support the annual review;
- (2) that the City Council's Code of Corporate Governance has been reviewed and is considered adequate:
- (3) that Chief Officers recognise the 'corporate ownership' of its governance requirements:
- (4) the significant governance issue relating to the Annual Governance Report and Internal Audit at the City Council.

6. NORWICH HIGHWAYS AGENCY JOINT COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2007/2008 AND 2008/2009

The Head of Budgeting and Financial Management, Norfolk County Council, presented the report and answered members' questions. The City Council had now provided the figures relating to permit parking income for 2007/2008, referred to in paragraph 3.9 of the report. The Audit Commission would be reviewing controls as part of the audit of the 2007/2008 accounts and these may identify further audit adjustments. Changes to the 2009/2010 Statement of Accounts were possible once the audits for the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 accounts were completed.

During discussion Councillor Gunson expressed dissatisfaction with the situation of being asked to approve Statements of Accounts that required amendment. Councillor Read also considered that the situation was unsatisfactory but considered that it was important to ensure that it did not occur in the future.

RESOLVED to approve the amended Statement of Accounts for 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 and note the current position with the audits of the outstanding Statement of Accounts.

7. 2009/2010 FINAL ACCOUNTS (NORWICH HIGHWAYS AGENCY COMMITTEE)

The Head of Budgeting and Finance Management presented the report and explained that members were being asked to approve the Statement of Accounts subject to audit. The Audit Commission would only be able to formally conclude its audit and issue its report and certificate if it received a copy of the 2009/2010 Statement of Accounts as approved by this Committee. The Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report for 2009/2010, which would be reported to a future meeting once the 2009/2010 audit had been completed, would provide details of all areas that required further amendment or action. Members were advised that there would be a further report on the financial position of parking permit income at the September meeting of the committee.

During discussion the Head of Budgeting and Finance Management explained that the variance shown on the table under the heading 'Revenue and Budget Outturn' reflected the additional costs offset by additional conditions. Further details of this could be provided to members. Members considered that the squeeze on public spending would require tighter control of variance figures.

Councillor Gunson said that he disagreed with the process of approving the Statement of Accounts, in the knowledge that it would require amendment, and for the audit process to identify the errors. The Head of Budgeting and Finance Management agreed an amendment to the resolution relating to information contained in paragraph 2.5 to be included. He confirmed that this was a situation where there was a backlog in the audits of prior years' accounts and once these had been completed the committee would in future only deal with one year's set of accounts. There were no deliberate errors in the accounts and it was not unusual for the audit process to identify some adjustments.

RESOLVED to:-

- (1) approve the Statement of Accounts for 2009/2010, subject to any amendments arising from the audits of the Statement of Accounts for 2007/2008 and 2008/2009;
- (2) note that a report on street parking income will be presented to the committee at its meeting on 23 September 2010;
- (3) ask that the Head of Budgeting and Finance Manager to provide members with further details of the variance relating to the budget and outturn.

8. COUNCILLOR ADRIAN GUNSON, MBE

RESOLVED to congratulate Councillor Gunson on being awarded an MBE in the Queen's birthday honours for 40 years' of service to the public.

CHAIR