

WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS COUNCIL CABINET HIGHWAYS AND
TRANSPORT STRATEGIC BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the **Cabinet Highways and Transport Strategic Board**
held on Tuesday, 6 June 2023 at 1.00 pm at Barrow Town Hall

PRESENT:

Cllr P Bell
Cllr J Brook
Cllr J Derbyshire
Cllr N Hughes (Vice Chair)
Cllr D Jones
Cllr S Sanderson
Cllr V Taylor
Cllr P Thornton (Chair)

Co-optees

Cllr J Battye	South Lakeland Locality Board
Cllr D Brook,	Furness Locality Board
Clr T Callister	Furness Locality Board
Cllr H Chaffey	South Lakeland Locality Board
Cllr J Murray	Eden Locality Board

Officers in attendance:

Mrs J Currie,	Democratic Services
Mr P Greenup,	Assistant Director - Sustainable Transport and Highways
Ms A Jones,	Director of Thriving Places
Ms L Jones,	Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer)

**PART I ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE PRESENCE
OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded that Cllr Thornton be nominated as Chair of the Cabinet Highways & Transport Strategic Board. This was then put to a vote, which was unanimous.

RESOLVED, that Cllr Thornton be elected as Chair for the Cabinet Highways & Transport Strategic Board.

The Chair thanked members for appointing him to the role and outlined his hopes for the success of the Board.

Cllr Thornton then proposed Cllr Hughes as Vice Chair of the Cabinet Highways & Transport Strategic Board, and this was seconded and put to a vote, which was unanimous.

RESOLVED, that Cllr N Hughes be elected as Vice Chair for the Cabinet Highways & Transport Strategic Board.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Archibald and Jarvis.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest made on this occasion.

However, members asked for clarity on whether they needed to declare interests in items of business as Chairs/Vice Chairs of the Locality Boards.

The Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer said it was unlikely but that members should use their own judgement. If they were unsure she suggested they seek advice from officers.

4. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED, that the press and public be not excluded during the discussion on any items of business on the agenda today.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chair proposed that the Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Highways and Transport Strategic Board be noted and this was seconded by Cllr Brook.

The Committee briefly discussed the remit of this committee and the issues which would have an impact on communities. The Chair felt that this would sit within the terms of the Strategic Board but that members and officers would need to consider carefully whether items needed to be considered by this committee or locality boards, as members would not want to see the issues going to both boards.

The Director of Thriving Places said it should only be strategic issues that should come before the Board, however, there would be the possibility of reviewing the terms of reference if needed going forward.

The recommendation was then put to a vote, which was unanimous.

RESOLVED, that the Terms of Reference of the Cabinet Highways Strategic Board be noted.

6. 1 YEAR DELIVERY PLAN AND 3 YEAR ROLLING PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Assets presented a report which sought approval from the Highways and Transport Strategic Board, for the one year capital (2023/24) highways delivery plan and to agree and review a draft three year strategic programme for highways.

The highways capital expenditure reflected investment in the highway asset and was defined as 'expenditure which adds to, and not merely maintains, the value of a fixed asset. Highway works eligible for capital funding included activities that would extend the life of the asset.

This report made recommendations for the Strategic Highways & Transport Board, for the indicative highway's capital programme 2023/24 and the prioritised lists of schemes, which will form the basis of the works programme.

It also made recommendations regarding a suggested future years rolling programme of work, based on the asset management approach, utilising condition data from the highways 'Scheme Manager' inventory.

Although advanced planning was maximised through the implementation of a rolling capital works programme, there were occasions when it was necessary, for sound operational reasons, to introduce new schemes into the forward programme or to re-prioritise the scheme list, based on new data and intelligence around the road network condition.

In a similar way it is sometimes not possible to deliver programmed schemes in the financial year initially intended, these schemes would be re-programmed into future years when implementation of works could take place.

This programme was intended to maintain and improve the condition of the Highways Road Network, and the following funding allocations for 2023/24 were recommended:

Asset Type	Capital Funding
Principal Road Network	£3.994m
Non Principal Road Network	£7.655m
Pothole Funds (*Includes additional pothole funding approved by DfT after March Council, still to be included in 23/24 Capital Programme)	£8.551m*
Bridges and Structures	£2.364m
Traffic Signals	£0.084m
Public Rights of Way	£0.050m
Major Projects/Engineering Safety Studies	£0.340m
Levelling Up Funding	£1.747m
DfT Safer Roads	£4.329m

Cllr Thornton moved the recommendations and these were seconded by Cllr Bell.

Cllr Bell was aware of the work the Countryside Officers undertook for landowners and parishes and asked if it would be possible to receive details of how much match funding officers managed to draw down for Rights of Way.

Cllr Murray asked about the difficulties that had occurred during the disaggregation of the Rights of Way team and whether this had now been resolved.

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport agreed that the disaggregation of the Rights of Way team had been difficult but he was pleased to inform members that a new team leader had now been recruited and plans were now in place to increase the size of the Rights of Way team.

The Rights of Way network in Westmorland and Furness was managed by a number of organisations, including:

- Westmorland and Furness Council
- Lake District National Park Authority
- Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority

Each of these bodies would have a Rights of Way Improvement Plan, and the one for W&F was currently in development. He would bring the Improvement Plan to this board for consideration.

Members felt it would be useful to have a Rights of Way Update at the next meeting.

Cllr Derbyshire had noticed that there appeared to be an increase in trees being affected by ‘ash dieback’ and asked if this spread further would the council have the funding to resolve this.

The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport was aware of the problem and agreed it was a challenge to resolve this. However, he reassured members that if diseased trees were causing health and safety issues the trees would be removed.

A brief discussion then took place on how the locality boards would fit into the Highways and Transport Strategic Board and how items might be fed through for consideration.

The recommendations were then put to a vote, which was unanimous.

RESOLVED, that the Highways and Transport Strategic Board

- 1) approves the budget allocation for the 2023/24 highway delivery plan as specified in section 3.7 of the report;
- 2) approves the indicative highways delivery plan for 2023/24 (as set out in appendix 1 of the report) and the indicative rolling strategic programme for 2024/25 and 2025/26 (as set out in appendix 2 & 3 respectively).

7. A66 NORTHERN TRANS PENNINE PROJECT UPDATE

The Cabinet Member for Sustainable Communities and Localities presented a report which updated members on the progress of the A66 NTP project for the dualling of the remaining 18 miles of single carriageway sections of the A66 between Junction 40 of the M6 at Penrith and Junction 53 of the A1(M) at Scotch Corner.

The A66 NTP was a major strategic road project promoted by NH, which as part of the national road network would improve journey time and reliability between the east and west of the country in the north of England. The route was particularly important for the movement of freight between south west Scotland and the east of England, including the east coast ports.

The project would bring improved connectivity to Westmorland and Furness, especially for Penrith which lay at the junction of the M6 and A66 (M6 J40). The project would therefore improve the attractiveness of the area as place for business investment and provide opportunities for growth.

The A66 NTP project needed development consent from the Secretary of State under the Planning Act 2008 and the Examination into the application closed on 29 May 2023. The Examining Authority (ExA) now had three months to submit its recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport, who was expected to make a decision at the end of 2023. If consent was granted, National Highways (NH) intended to start construction in Spring 2024.

The Council had expressed strong support in principle for the project, which would bring improved connectivity and potential investment to the area. It had also made clear through its submissions to the Examination that its concerns including detrunking, diversions, major junction design, walking, cycling and horse-riding provision, HGV parking provision, and skills, accommodation and employment, must be satisfactorily resolved.

At the end of the Examination, agreement had been reached on most, but not all matters. A Principal Areas of Disagreement Summary Statement, was submitted by the Council listing the main areas of disagreement and this was further clarified in Statement of Common Ground between the Council and NH which set out which matters were agreed or not agreed between the two parties.

The main areas of concern were:-

- De-trunking
- Diversions
- Junction Capacity M6 J40 to Kemplay Bank
- Wetheriggs Country Park
- HGV Parking
- Walking, cycling and horse riding routes
- Land at Skirsgill Depot
- Appleby Horse Fair
- Employment and skills
- Accommodation
- Environmental issues (noise, wildlife)

The contractors (Kier, Keltbray and Balfour Beatty) have been appointed and have begun dialogue with the Council about detailed design. Engagement in this process was essential to ensure that the Council influenced the design and raises any concerns regarding road designs and alignment, drainage details, speed limits, etc.

Cllt Taylor moved the recommendations and these were seconded by Cllr Bell.

Cllr Bell felt the letter should make it clear that there was overwhelming support for this scheme from Westmorland and Furness Council. She also asked if there would be funding available from NH to cover the cost of the Council's officer support for this project, which would be considerable.

Mr Hillyard from National Highways reassured members that funding for officer support was in place until November 2023. Members asked Mr Hillyard to provide feedback to NH that should this consent be granted for the project further funding for this would be required.

Cllr Derbyshire raised the issue of diversions and the effect this would have on traffic flows in and around Penrith. The area was already heavily congested from the motorway into Penrith on Friday afternoon and she wondered if it would be possible to install sensors to change the traffic flow when traffic built up.

Cllr Hughes agreed with this sentiment as the existing traffic congestion was already a problem and he felt the diversions during construction would only make this worse.

The Chair suggested that NH speak to Cllr Murray outside of the meeting, as communication with local members would be crucial.

Mr Hillyard said NH had prepared a paper on operational issues at Kemplay Bank and Junction 40, which he would share with members.

Brief discussion then took place on net zero targets, the Construction Traffic Improvement Plan, and the adjoining railways before the recommendations were put to a unanimous vote.

RESOLVED, that the Cabinet Highways and Transport Strategic Board

- 1) notes the content of this report on the A66;
- 2) agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Transport to support the continued development of the A66 scheme.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF A 20 MPH POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Assets presented a report which sought members' views on the development of a new 20mph policy and criteria to be used in assessing requests for 20mph speed limits.

20mph speed limits were important in supporting local communities and through the Council Plan aimed to promote lower vehicle speeds. The main aims were to promote safer roads, reduce congestion, reduce vehicle pollution, enhance the

environment for walking and cycling and support the community having a sense of place.

Local authorities were encouraged to consider the introduction of more 20mph speed limits and zones, over time, in urban areas and built-up village streets that were primarily residential, to ensure greater safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

This policy was intended to bring forward more areas for 20mph speed limits across Westmorland and Furness area and to streamline the introduction to achieve roll-out over an accelerated timetable.

The introduction of 20mph speed limits more broadly across Westmorland and Furness Council was set out as a priority to achieve the following:

- make streets safer by reducing speeds and enabling a more equitable use of the road space for all users (vulnerable road users, sustainable transport, businesses and car users)
- encourage residents to walk or cycle by reducing speeds
- bring health benefits both physical and mental
- reduce noise and pollution by amending the way vehicles accelerate/deaccelerate

Each scheme would require a Traffic Regulation Order to introduce the reduced speed limit with informal consultation to be undertaken within the Local Community to allow consideration and if necessary to address any valid concerns. For each location there would be a requirement for formal statutory advertising and consultation to be undertaken with any objections being heard at the Locality Boards ahead of the decision to approve each scheme.

Cabinet wanted to make 20mph speed limits easier to introduce, however, Cumbria Constabulary support would be required on each scheme proposed.

All members welcomed the development of the 20mph policy and a discussion ensued on the 'pros and cons' of introducing these. However, there was overwhelming support for the introduction of these where viable and members hoped this would be viewed positively.

The recommendations were then moved and seconded and put to a vote, which was unanimous.

RESOLVED, that the Highways and Transport Strategic Board support the development of a new 20mph policy for Westmorland and Furness Council for future Board approval.

9. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The Cabinet Member for Transport and Environmental Services presented a report which asked members to note the role of Highways and Transport Strategic Board in developing strategies, policies and measures to support the development of an

inclusive, sustainable and integrated transport system. Sustainable transport delivers a range of benefits for individuals, communities and the environment.

Members were also asked to note the role of the three Locality Boards in agreeing the implementation of a one year programme of Local Sustainable Transport schemes for the area. Local Sustainable transport schemes could include footpaths and rights of way, cycling and walking improvements, school streets, community transport support.

The Westmorland and Furness Council Plan sets out the council's vision, values and priorities. In the plan the Council had made a commitment to maximise the use of our natural environment and support wellbeing by making it easier and safer to walk, cycle and travel in environmentally sustainable ways. The Council wants to empower communities to work with us to improve sustainable transport options to ensure that Westmorland and Furness was a great place to live, work and thrive.

Developing sustainable transport policies and strategies would help the council decide where best to spend money to improve transport for everyone and the environment and ensure it was best placed to take advantage of funding opportunities, react positively to change and influence Government policy - both by ourselves and in partnership with others. Investment in sustainable transport could have a positive impact on the prospects and life chances of young people and would support businesses to create the workforce and skills to meet the needs of the economy. Low carbon and active travel solutions would help to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.

The Highways and Transport Strategic Board would agree strategies and policies relating to Transport that were not in the Policy Framework, including

- Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- 20 mph Policy
- Bus Service Improvement Plan

The Locality Boards would have oversight of Local Sustainable Transport schemes, such as rights of way, cycling and walking improvements, school streets, community transport. Cabinet had recommended to approve the delegation of £0.900m to the three Locality Boards for investment in local sustainable travel and transport schemes. The proposed allocations were:

- Furness - £230,400
- Eden - £250,200
- SL - £419,400

Members asked about the availability of officer capacity to support them in implementing the Bus Improvement Plan. The Director of Thriving Places responded to say there was currently no permanent officer support for this but the Council planned to employ permanent officers but this would take some time. In the meantime the Director would be happy to receive feedback from members on this.

Cllr Battye asked for clarification on whether locality boards could subsidise bus routes and the Director clarified that it would not be possible to subsidise routes run by a commercial operator.

Cllr Chaffey asked a question about the Cartmel Peninsular Service which the Director responded to.

Cllr Callister said the members of Barrow Locality Board would welcome the 20mph policy and he looked forward to hearing suggestions from members on this.

Members then had a brief discussion on the availability of Government funding for schemes. The Director of Thriving Places said there had been two recent funding streams from Government about funding for the Bus Recovery Grant and the funding which would allow bus operators to cap single bus fares outside of London at £2. She was not aware of any other current available funding.

Cllr D Brook had some concerns about the way the funding was to be split between the Locality Board, and this was noted.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Hughes and seconded by Cllr Jones, and put to a vote, which was unanimous.

RESOLVED, that members

- 1) note the role of Strategic Highways and Transport Board in developing strategies and policies relating to Sustainable Transport;
- 2) note the role of Locality Boards in agreeing Local Sustainable Transport Schemes.

10. REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS OF THE LOCALITY BOARDS

The Chair invited the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Locality Boards to make any representations on behalf of their areas.

Cllr D Brook asked a question about backstreets and whether they were classed as 'highway'. The Assistant Director – Highways and Transport responded to say they would only be designated as a highway if they had been adopted.

The Chair informed Cllr D Brook that the highways map on the website contained detailed of which roads had been adopted, so this may help to identify which backstreets were adopted.

The Locality Board Chairs and Vice Chairs welcomed the opportunity to bring issues forward on behalf of the Boards but did not make any representations on this occasion.

11. URGENT ITEMS

None.

The meeting ended at 3.35 pm