

Nottingham City Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at in the Ground Floor Committee Room - Loxley House, Station Street, Nottingham, NG2 3NG on Wednesday 4 March 2020 from 2:00pm to 3:53pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Anne Peach (Chair)
Councillor Carole McCulloch (Vice Chair)
Councillor Georgia Power (Vice Chair, items 50-53)
Councillor Maria Joannou
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis
Councillor Jane Lakey
Councillor Ethan Radford
Councillor Angharad Roberts

Absent

Councillor Azad Choudhry
Councillor Andrew Rule
Councillor Cate Woodward

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Adrian Mann - Governance Officer
Councillor Adele Williams - Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Local Transport
Laura Wilson - Senior Governance Officer

50 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Andrew Rule - Council business
Councillor Cate Woodward - unwell

51 Declarations of Interests

In relation to item 53, in the interests of transparency, Councillor Georgia Power declared that she holds a Robin Hood Mobility Pass.

In relation to item 53, in the interests of transparency, Councillor Angharad Roberts declared that she is a director of Nottingham City Transport.

52 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2020 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

53 Discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Local Transport

Councillor Adele Williams, Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Local Transport, gave a presentation on the current position in relation to her Local Transport remit and performance in relation to the Council Plan priorities. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the number of people walking, cycling or taking public transport to work has increased by 11%. The newly-introduced Robin Hood Card is an integrated public transport ticket and is now used by more than 50,000 people. Concessionary bus and tram passes for senior citizens continue to be delivered, further concessions are being developed for older people, and tram use has been added to the Robin Hood Mobility Pass. The network of continuous, safer commuter cycling routes has been increased and more 20mph speed limits have been introduced in housing areas, where residents have asked for them. Well-used pavements are gritted in winter as well as roads, to help protect people from slips and falls. The Government has been lobbied for further money to fund essential road and pavements repairs, and funding across longer periods would be extremely useful for supporting longer-term schemes of preventative repair work;
- (b) the priorities over the next four years are to:
- fill 50,000 potholes, replace 250 pavements and resurface 100 roads;
 - campaign for the same transport discounts for 16-21 year-olds as those provided to students;
 - upgrade existing cycle routes and create new ones to encourage more leisure and commuter cycling, in collaboration with the County Council;
 - help Nottingham people access jobs by promoting and building tram network extensions south of Clifton and from Chilwell Park and Ride to the proposed new HS2 Station at Toton, and explore the feasibility of further major tram extensions;
 - increase the frequency of weekend night bus services at peak times;
 - introduce a cheap peak travel offer for people who have concessionary bus passes;
 - introduce contactless payments for bus tram fares and city centre parking and keep Nottingham moving with a comprehensive road and pavement gritting programme;
- (c) there has been significant engagement on the creation of cycle routes in the context of the Broadmarsh shopping centre redevelopment and it is a main aim to enable cyclists to cross the city centre easily and safely, while keeping cycle routes separate to pedestrian routes. Adults cycling on pavements (which can include delivery riders) is a significant problem in parts of the city and strategies need to be in place to ensure that the appropriate monitoring and enforcement action is carried out by Community Protection Officers;
- (d) the Committee asked whether alternative funding sources (such as the Local Access Fund) could be used to support and continue the provision of cycling proficiency courses in schools. This could help to encourage children to cycle to school, rather than being dropped off by car. Currently, officers work with all schools to help them develop travel plans for pupils and staff, in addition to supporting large employers both inside and outside the city area in developing these documents. The models used by other Councils to reduce the number of parents dropping off children outside schools by car will be reviewed to inform a pilot scheme for a car-free school environment, which would need to include extensive consultation with residents living near to schools. 'Walking bus' schemes are in place for some schools and it may be possible to expand these;

- (e) planning and feasibility studies are underway for the further expansion of the tram network, including potential links to Derby and the proposed HS2 station at Toton. A bid to carry out foundation work has been made to the Transforming Cities Fund and, although the project is unlikely to happen soon enough to secure the funding at this stage, it will ensure that the funders are aware of the City's infrastructure plans for the tram network. Currently, the development of new passenger rail lines, or the reopening of stations and lines closed in the past, is not under consideration. The Committee noted that cars and their contents left in Park and Ride facilities can be targets for thieves, so the appropriate security measures should be in place;
- (f) work is underway to increase night bus services and other night-time public transport options. Following wide-ranging consultation, the Robin Hood Mobility Pass will be reinstated. A scheme of public transport travel training for young people is in place, incentivised by the introduction of related travel passes. It is intended to project the public transport network from cuts and to ensure that all citizens live within 400m of a bus route. Where viable, subsidised bus routes can be replaced by a route that is operated commercially, to achieve savings for the Council and enable investment elsewhere on the network. Any potential changes to the legislation from Government on how new bus routes may be established will be kept under review;
- (g) Highways England discovered a defect on the underside of Clifton Bridge and this led to the closure of part of the A52 for safety reasons from 6 February. Following repairs to the damaged steel cable on the left side of the bridge, it was possible to reopen one lane after one week. The Bridge was closed every night for two weeks as works were carried out to reopen a second lane. The plan is now to create a second outbound lane, reopening on 15 March after two weeks of overnight work;
- (h) the full scheme of necessary repairs is projected to take up to a year. Due to this, it will not be feasible to delay all planned road maintenance to the rest of the network, including repairs to Trent Bridge, and repairs will be progressed on a case-by-case basis. However, non-vital works will be delayed. The funding will be in place to enable any emergency roadworks, and the planned work will be completed for the new road system being put in place as part of the Broadmarsh shopping centre redevelopment. A full, detailed timetable for the repairs has been requested from Highways England, with clear dates, so that progress can be monitored in a transparent way and reassurance is given that the fully, required resources are being deployed;
- (i) to help manage the substantial disruption caused by the closure of the Clifton Bridge, funding for a disruption mitigation package has been requested from Highways England. Any citizen support in achieving this funding, such as through petitions, would be very welcome. Car commuters are moving to use the tram and buses to complete the last part of their journey into the city and it is aimed to introduce travel support offers, in addition establishing travel plans with major employers. It is also intended to install more boards to provide live transport information, so that people have more advance warning of issues when planning their travel. The Police support in managing the badly-affected junctions is vital and further funding is needed to sustain this;

- (j) in terms of accountability, Highways England are being asked to provide the recent inspection reports for the bridge and to set whether or not it should have been reasonably possible for the scheme of inspection carried out to have identified the issues that lead to the emergency closure of the bridge. If the inspection regime was carried out to the national standard and would have nevertheless not identified the significant issues in this case, the standards should be reviewed for improvement in future inspections;
- (k) the closure of the bridge represents a significant, unexpected cost to the city, and has had a substantial impact on a wide range of services and people. Clifton Bridge is the only bridge of its type in the city, but officers are now reviewing the other bridges that are maintained by the Council to provide reassurance to citizens that they are safe. A letter has been sent to the Government Minister with responsibility for this area, who has made a general statement in Parliament, and a request has been made to Highways England to improve the way in which it communicates with the Council. To aid communication, the County Council and the Emergency Services also participate in the Council's meetings with Highways England. The Emergency Services have been consulted on how the bridge closure will affect their coverage, but they have not requested specific additional support at this time;
- (l) the Committee was concerned that there is a general public perception that the bridge does not seem to be in good repair, and that it is the Council that is responsible for the bridge – which is owned entirely by Highways England as an agency of Government. The Council has released a number of communications to make this position clear. The Committee noted that Nottingham's traffic congestion rating by the TomTom traffic index for Monday 10 February was more than 200% between 3:00pm and 5:00pm, which was reported nationally as Nottingham being the most congested city in the world. However, according to the data, the average congestion level for this time on a Monday in Nottingham is around 53%. As such, the continual development of the public transport network is needed to combat these levels of congestion;
- (m) the performance of public transport operatives and Council Highways officers immediately following the closure of the bridge was extremely strong, particularly due to the lack of warning. Further network resilience planning is underway and active traffic management strategies are in place, such as making changes to the timings at junctions with traffic lights to respond to the current volumes of traffic. A full risk assessment is in place for the three critical bridges across the Trent and schemes are in place to encourage commuters and visitors to leave their cars as far outside of the city centre as possible and travel in on public transport.

Resolved to write to Highways England to invite a representative to attend the April meeting of the Committee, to brief the members on the fully background, general situation and projected timetable for the repairs to Clifton Bridge, and on the disruption mitigation package that will be put in place.

54 Consultation Working Group Feedback

Councillor Pavlos Kotsonis presented a report on his broad, informal overview of how consultations are carried out by Nottingham City Council, including their limitations

and the potential areas for improvement with the current model of operations. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the Council has moved away from using Survey Monkey because of concerns relating to the security of personal data. Consultations are now carried out using a paperless system called SNAP, which approximately 27 members of staff have been trained to use. Most of the consultations undertaken can be found on the Engage Hub webpage and are open to the public. Some consultations are also carried out in paper form, and translations are provided on request for those who do not speak English as their first language;
- (b) for large-scale projects or those for judicial review, the Research, Engagement and Consultations (REC) team is available to offer advice on how to run effective consultations. The REC consists of two members of staff, who are able to advise relevant colleagues in all departments on their consultation proposals. Consultations for Planning Applications and Traffic matters are carried out separately by those departments and have their own webpages, and some other departments resource carrying out consultations without using the REC team – though they should still be using SNAP;
- (c) consultations are carried out in accordance with the Gunning Principles. They must be started at the formative stage of the decision-making process and allow an appropriate timeframe for response. Consultations must be readily understandable, relevant and informative, and respondents should be informed of the outcomes of the consultation and how their input affected the decision-making on the particular issue. As participation in consultations is self-selecting, it can be difficult to achieve a fully representative return, so strong attention must be given to reaching as many affected groups as possible as part of the process, to avoid important voices not being heard;
- (d) to engage in effective consultation, the engagement skills within the REC team need to be reflected across the Council as a whole, and this could be done through the creation of a best practice guide for colleagues. The Engage Hub and the active consultations do need to be displayed prominently on the Council's website, with a clear indication of its purpose. Although other consultation process take place separately, such as for Planning and Traffic issues, they should nevertheless be signposted through the Hub;
- (e) some departments carry out consultations using external consultants, so a spending review should be carried out in this area to scrutinise the associated costs and ensure efficiency. Clarity should be sought on what the current spending is on consultations in terms of the capital expenditure and the actual spend, taking into account staff time. This spending should also be split to differentiate between the cost of statutory consultations, and the funds used for non-statutory consultations;
- (f) careful consideration should be given to non-statutory consultations to ensure that they bring added value to decision-making, and that the right questions are asked in the right way. Consultation documents should be as inspiring as possible and the impact of feedback should be made clear to respondents, so citizens are shown that their voice is heard in decision-making. Face-to-face contact and focus

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groups are an effective alternative to questionnaires in gaining citizens' views, but their use is limited due to the greater cost. However, it is always important for councillors to engage with their constituents as part of the consultation process.

Resolved to:

- (1) endorse the recommendations as set out in the report;**
- (2) request that the Portfolio Holder for Communities considers the viability of a Council-wide review of the spending on consultations each year, to take into account both the capital and actual spend (including staff time) in this area, and differentiate between the cost of statutory and non-statutory consultations.**

55 Work Programme Development 2020/21

Laura Wilson, Senior Governance Officer, presented a report on some potential issues for scrutiny by the Committee for the 2020/21 municipal year. Committee members identified the following as important issues to address:

- (a) registration on the Electoral Register, how this can be increased and how under-represented groups can be encouraged to register to vote;
- (b) affordable housing, and whether the provision is adequate and affordable for local residents;
- (c) how different employment services mesh together and how effective they are in meeting their targets;
- (d) what has been done to date to improve fire safety in residential housing, following the Grenfall Tower disaster.

56 Work Programme 2019/20

The Committee noted the Work Programme for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year, and that Highways England will be invited to attend the April meeting to discuss the current scheme of repair works required to Clifton Bridge.