

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 July 2021 at 7.00 pm**

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**Present:** Councillors Alex Anderson (Chair), David Van Day (Vice-Chair), Tom Kelly, Martin Kerin, Graham Snell and Lee Watson

**In attendance:** Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection  
Rebecca Ellsmore, Strategic Lead Regeneration  
Peter Wright, Strategic Lead of Highways and Infrastructure  
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, and live-streamed onto the Council's website.

The Chair addressed the Committee explaining there were technical issues and passed over to Democratic Services to explain the situation. The Senior Democratic Services Officer explained unfortunately the system to enable a hybrid meeting was not working, this meant officers who were due to present items 9 and 10 were unable to join the meeting. She confirmed that the system had been tested earlier that day and was working fine. Members were advised of deferring the items to the next meeting in October or should they wish they could have an extraordinary meeting. The Chair suggested to go ahead with an extraordinary meeting and for Officers to contact Members with suggested dates.

### **1. Minutes**

The minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 February 2021 were approved as a true and correct record.

### **2. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **3. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4. Approval of Naming & Numbering of Streets and Highway Assets Policy**

The Strategic Lead of Highways and Infrastructure presented the report to Members and in doing so explained the Council had statutory obligation to administrate the process of street naming and numbering. He continued to explain the process in place was currently being updated, however it was not contained within a policy. The aim of the report was therefore to formalise the process and take the opportunity to include the process of naming rights of individuals.

Members heard that the Council was responsible for the administration of the street naming and numbering process to ensure that all properties within the borough were addressed officially. With addresses of a property becoming ever more of a more important issue, organisations such as Royal mail and the emergency services required an efficient and more accurate way of locating properties.

The Committee were advised that within the policy there was also the ability to enable the Council to formally name and register elements of the highway such as bridges and roundabouts. The Strategic Lead of Highways and Infrastructure further advised, the policy was to be administered by the highways infrastructure team and key decisions relating to the naming of highway ethics would be referred to the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation and would then be submitted for Cabinet approval. Members heard that any changes would also be reported to the relevant Ward Members before decisions are made.

Councillor Kerin asked if there was scope for future roads to be named after people such as those working in the NHS especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in a way to thank those people. The Strategic Lead of Highways and Infrastructure advised this could be considered and taken through the application process however when naming a road after a person who may be deceased the relevant criteria would have to be followed.

Councillor Watson enquired as to whether new developments with no street names could be considered to honour those people such as in the NHS as these developments had not been named yet. Officers thanked Members for their suggestions and confirmed they would look into the suggestions.

**RESOLVED:**

**That Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the above named Policy and processes contained therein for implementation and recommend to Cabinet for approval.**

**5. Highways Street Lighting Central Management System**

The Strategic Lead of Highways and Infrastructure addressed Members informing them the report was for their approval to commence the tender process and award of contract for installing a central management system for highways street lighting. Members heard funding had been secured as part of the Councils internal capital bid program for the implementation of a highway street lighting central management system, mentation of this system meant that the Local Authority could remotely monitor all the street lighting assets.

Members heard the bid included the provision of the installation of seven bass stations which would interact with the existing lighting infrastructure and enabled officers to monitor and adapt the lighting levels across the borough. It was further explained the project would generate future energy and CO2

savings as the majority of the light in assets owned by the Council could be remotely controlled and monitored. It was further explained the project would generate financial savings through a reduction in maintenance costs such as reduced callouts. All in all the project would assist officers in managing the system and offering a better customer service to residents. It was explained that officers had to go out to tender in September and award contract in January therefore six months before creating the base stations.

The Chair of the Committee thanked officers for the report commenting he felt it was positive and had many benefits. He went on to enquire as to whether there were any disadvantages to the new scheme. The Strategic Lead for Highways Infrastructure explained a lot of Local Authorities already had a similar system in place. The system itself would enable real-time calculations to be used therefore making it more efficient.

Councillor Kerin also thanked officers for the report and enquired as to why the Council was going out to tender and not completing the work in house. It was explained this was due to the specialist software and as far as officers were aware there were no Local Authorities currently using this system, which was in house. He explained once the software and base stations had been installed officers would be running the day-to-day working of the system.

During discussions it was confirmed that the £1 million grant received through the capital bid was to assist with the installation of the software and once in place the Councils annual savings were predicted around £125,000 along with maintenance costs for the CMS system estimated to be £25,000 per annum.

**RESOLVED:**

**That Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet the commencement of the tender process and subsequent award of a contract to install a Central Management System for Highways Street lighting.**

**6. Grays South: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass – Project Progress and Grays South: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass - Land Assembly**

The Strategic Lead for Regeneration explained both items (seven and eight) related to Grays and as such interlinked. It was suggested it might be easier to present both items together and then answer any questions, the Chair agreed to this approach.

The Strategic Lead for Regeneration continued to explain the first item (item seven) was in relation to project progress, and commented that Members were maybe aware of the budget set by Cabinet in 2017 of £27.4 million for the Grays underpass scheme, which included the underpass itself, steps to allow people to go over the train line and the public realm which was wrapped around the site.

Members heard that in July 2020 officers presented Cabinet with a report explaining it was felt they would exceed the budget and proposed it be extended to £37.9 million, this was based on officers having additional information at that stage than they did in 2017. Officers agreed to report back to Members with further details in relation to the cost plan, and it was explained that in the interim officers would continue to work on option C of the scheme which was chosen by Cabinet as the preferred option in 2020.

It was explained savings had been found in the cost plan produced by Network Rail, however it was important to note that in some instances costs had been transferred between the parties so reductions were not always genuine savings. The total cost of the project is now estimated at £37.3 million, which was a slight improvement on where officers were last year however it was noted this was still an excess on the original budget.

The Strategic Lead for Regeneration moved onto item eight and explained officers had decided to report as a separate report as it related to land assembly for the scheme and to specific legal requirements when entering into a CPO. It was still the aim of the Council to be able to purchase the land required by private treaty without the use of compulsory purchase powers, however compulsory purchase would create a framework which would give the topics for discussion and hopefully enable officers to acquire the land within the timescales of the scheme.

Councillor Anderson Chair of the Committee commented that in a previous report it has mentioned the towns fund had been applied for however in the current report it mentioned that the towns fund has been explored. He asked for an update on where the application was for this. Officers explained that grants for the towns fund had been applied for and submitted, with the final decision resting with the government officers were still awaiting their announcement which had been postponed.

Councillor Kerin commented he was concerned with the increase in budget cost and this caused him concerns as to the deliverability to the scheme. He sought assurances from officers for the completion of the project. It was commented officers were as confident as they could be at this stage of the scheme, the Strategic Lead for Regeneration continued there were risks within the scheme, however officers were confident they had enough contingency for those risks. It was further commented that there could be a cheaper option to produce the Grays underpass however this would not achieve the quality of project that the town needed.

During discussions Members echoed Councillor Kerin's concerns and commented the report did not include enough factual information relating to the cost plan. It was further commented there was a lot of the use of words such as 'maybe' within the report. It was deliberated how Members felt they needed more openness to report as this could perhaps take away some of the concerns, such as a complete breakdown to the current costs of the scheme. The Strategic Lead for Regeneration explained there is always a challenge between presented information to Members early and allowing an opportunity

to comment on project direction versus waiting for a more concrete cost plan which would come at a later stage when many decisions would have been taken. It was further committed that the design was still in the relatively early stages, risks and assumptions remained within the cost plan but officers had explained what these were and how contingency had been allocated against them producing a cost plan that officers feel is robust.

It was enquired by Councillor Snell as to how much contingency there was within the £37.3 million for the scheme as “spades in the ground”. Officers commented there was a number of elements to the “spade in the ground” cost of the current scheme, this included Network Rail costs which were around £8 million, there was approximately £7 million of land assembly and other cost elements which were part of the scheme such as the public realm either side of the underpass itself.

Members commented on the recommendation and the following was noted:

A. *Endorse the next steps in the programme for the project.*

In favour: Councillors Anderson and Kelly

Against: Councillors Kerin, Snell, Van Day and Watson

Councillor Snell then suggested changing the word endorsed to noted, this was not agreed by Councillors Kerin and Watson.

B. *Delegate to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and External Affairs, the procurement for the next contract stages set out in the programme.* This was agreed subject to including briefing notes updates for the Committee.

C. *Approve the latest iteration of the cost plan, inc paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 and note the efforts made to continue to drive cost efficiency.* This was put to the vote and was not approved by the Committee.

On the recommendation on Item 8, Councillor Kerin suggested that perhaps the Committee amend the wording, the Chair suggested Members voted on the current recommendation before rewording it. Members took to the vote for the recommendation and the outcome was as follows:

**In Favour:** Councillors Anderson, Kelly, Snell and Van Day

**Against:** Councillors Kerin and Watson

**RESOLVED:**

***Grays South: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass – Project Progress***

**The Committee was asked to comment on the recommendations below that will be put to Cabinet for approval.**

a. **Endorse the next steps in the programme for the project.**

- b. **Delegate to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and External Affairs, the procurement for the next contract stages set out in the programme**
- c. **Approve the latest iteration of the cost plan, inc paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 and note the efforts made to continue to drive cost efficiency**

### ***Grays South: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass – Land Assembly***

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are asked to endorse the approach to land assembly set out in this report in including the use of the Council’s powers of Compulsory Purchase and land appropriation.**

#### **7. Parking Policy and Strategy and Parking Design & Development Standards**

As per the Chairs announcement at the start of the meeting this item is to be deferred.

#### **8. Flooding in Thurrock – January 2021**

As per the Chairs announcement at the start of the meeting this item is to be deferred.

#### **9. Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/2022**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised Members of the Overview And Scrutiny Review which took place last year and two of the recommendations agreed by Cabinet, which where the use of briefing notes and the potential for an Overview And Scrutiny Project. It was explained to Members that briefing notes were to be used to reduce the amount ‘to note’ reports and to enable Members to receive updated information instead of a report in a timelier manner for big projects such as the Local Plan.

The Chair of the Committee welcomed the use of briefing notes as did Councillor Kerin who commented he was pleased to hear that although briefing notes could be used this would not take away a full report should Members require one. Members asked if the Democratic Services Officer could look at dates of the committee and its proximity to Cabinet meetings.

On discussing items to be presented during the municipal year Members asked for the following:

- An update on cycling and tranche funding - February 2022,
- An update on the towns fund - February 2022,
- A briefing note on a trams-network and noted on the work programme,

- A briefing note update on East Facing Slips and noted on the work programme

**RESOLVED:**

**That the following items be included on the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme:**

- An update on cycling and tranche funding - February 2022,
- An update on the towns fund - February 2022,
- A briefing note on a trams-network and noted on the work programme,
- A briefing note update on East Facing Slips and noted on the work programme

**The meeting finished at 8.17pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)