

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 July 2020 at 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors Martin Kerin (Chair), John Allen (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Oliver Gerrish, David Potter and David Van Day

**In attendance:** Councillor Mark Coxshall, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration  
Andy Millard, Director of Place  
Sean Clark, Director of Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property  
Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects  
David Moore, Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery  
Rebecca Elsmore, Regeneration Programme Manager  
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 to be live streamed via the Councils website.

### 1. Minutes

The minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January 2020 was approved as a true and correct record, subject to the following amendment to minute number 19, paragraph 4:

*“The Vice-Chair sought clarification on the costs of the project and what the overspend would be. Anna Eastgate explained that the cost was originally valued at £90 million and the DfT had allocated £80 million of funds towards the project.”*

### 2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

### 3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

### 4. A13 Widening Report

The Director of Place, presented the report which was provided at the request by the Chair of the Committee in order to inform Members on the following specific matters relating to the A13 scheme:

- A breakdown of costs and how the latest out turn forecast has been calculated,
- Details of where the finance to meet any shortfall would come from,

- A timeline of when issues had arisen in the programme resulting in an anticipated completion date of autumn/winter 2021

Members heard how the A13 widening scheme would, when completed provide a continuous three lane dual carriageway linking the M25 to the A1014 Manorway junction. This continuous carriageway was to improve journey reliability, reduce queuing and congestion thereby improving the environment. It was observed how the project involved widening the A13 Stanford le Hope by-pass from 2 to 3 lanes in both directions, from the junction with the A128 (Orsett Cock roundabout) in the west to the A1014 (The Manorway) in the east and replacing four bridges.

The Director of Place explained that the consent for the project was granted by a Harbour Empowerment Order in 2008, with the Council taking on responsibility for the preliminary design in 2011. He continued by outlining the breakdown of costs within the report, which included, Construction, Statutory Undertakers, Preliminary Design, Contract Supervision, Detailed Design, Land Purchase, Technical Support and Risk Allowance. The Committee heard the original approved project budget was agreed at £78,866,586 in 2016, and these costs were based on a preliminary design.

It was highlighted the Council had recently undertaken a value for money (VfM) exercise on the project which had identified based on the current out turn forecast, the scheme still represented high VfM. This meant an additional grant was made available by DfT to SELEP of £8.9m and the SELEP Accountability Board agreed to provide this funding to the A13.

Members were advised of the potential options available to bridge the forecast funding gap were currently being explored and had not yet been confirmed, however it was likely that a combination of funding sources would be required to meet the funding gap.

The third issue raised related to the diversion of utility apparatus. It was explained Statutory Undertakers could only undertake activities to their apparatus at particular times of the year, usually when there is less demand on the system.

The Chair of Committee thanked the Director for presenting the report and explained he would ask each member individually for questions and the questions to be asked in blocks.

He then started by stating the figure within the report of £115 million, was quite significant overspend and the new completion date of the end of 2021 was also a significant delay. He continued to ask if Officers could give a cast iron guarantee that the project would be completed at the end of 2021. The Chair then move onto his second question which he queried out of the three options available to the council to bridge of £27 million funding gap, which would be the preferred option, as far as he was concerned increasing taxes for residents, was not an option.

The Director of Place commented that that he could not give a cast iron guarantee that the budget and the timeline would not slip any further. However, he added that he was confident that officers had a strong grip on the project. Nevertheless, a cast-iron guarantee could not be given due to unseen obstacles which were out of the Council's control, for example the impacts of Covid-19

The Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property thanked the Chair for his question and explained within the report that there are three main options in order to bridge the forecast funding gap and all three were being explored. He continued by stating that no option had yet been confirmed, and it was likely that a combination of the funding sources would be required to meet the funding gap. The Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property advised members that using council resources such as capital receipts as funding would be a last resort.

The Vice-Chair addressed the committee echoing the Chairs concerns on the overspend of £27 million on the project, he further stated that he agreed there must be other ways to close the funding gap and not to increase taxes for residents.

Councillor Anderson commented that the crux of the issue for this project appear to be in 2016, as there were two contracts with two different companies. He asked whether there was an audit trail for the decision to split contracts within project. The Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects explained there was an audit trail and in 2016 two Cabinet reports signed off the split contracts, these were taken in March 2016 and then December 2016.

Councillor Gerrish queried the overspend seeking a further breakdown of the £35 million overspend, which included the additional £8.9 million grant. The Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects highlighted £33 million of the overspend and explained the breakdown in the following ways under the terms of the contract, compensation event for structures £12 million, drainage compensation event £9 million, utility diversion works £10 million plus additional costs relating to communications and water, there was also £1.8 million in inflation costs due to additional delay in commencing contract.

Councillor Gerrish continued to question the potential funding stream used if the Council was to go ahead and use the capital program to pay the funding gap for the project. The Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property explained that if the need to use capital resources arose, this would need to be identified within the 2021/2022 or 2022/2023 accounts.

Councillor Potter thanked officers for the report, and commented he had confidence in officers that they will do their best to ensure residents were not put upon to close the funding gap for the project.

## **RESOLVED:**

**That the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and comments on the report content.**

### **5. Stanford-le-Hope Interchange Report**

The Director of Place introduced the report and in doing so explained, the report was provided at the Chair's request in order to inform Members on the following specific matters relating to the Stanford Le Hope scheme and in particular:

- A review of the original scheme design, costs incurred, overspend figures and any delays
- Consideration of the revised proposal for the station and the car park

He continued to explain the scheme involved the construction of new station buildings with footbridge and lifts, passenger information system, bus turnaround facility, passenger drop-off points and cycle parking. Since the last update to the PTR Overview & Scrutiny Committee, a pause and reflect exercise had been undertaken to identify a deliverable and cost effective replacement station which could deliver the criteria set out in the approved business case.

Members heard how the original preliminary design of the scheme with a cantilevered deck and podium proved to be a complex and expensive design to deliver. The need for the bus turnaround facility meant that additional land would be required which was in ownership outside of the control of the principle parties.

It was highlighted that the original budget for the scheme was £19.09 million which included an additional £4 million approved by Cabinet in February 2019. The committee were advised there are no delays with the programme at present and the original proposed completion date was August 2021.

The Chair of Committee enquired as to the additional £4 million approved by Cabinet bring the budget for the scheme up to £19 million and saw if this was correct. The Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects advised the original project would never have been deliverable on the £19 million budget. She continued by saying the scheme now had a fix tender contract and with a detailed design was in agreement of meeting the budget.

The Vice Chair of the Committee commented that in comparison to the previous report on the A13 Widening, this project appeared to be a job well done and would be brought in on budget. He continued by stating he felt it was a good idea to scrap the previous design and in turn find land to ensure the new design would be brought in on budget. He further thanked the Assistant Director for her hard work on this project.

Members agreed that the new design for the project was greatly welcomed, especially as it managed to save the creek behind the station and included additional parking.

During discussions Members heard how the outcome of this project had enabled officers to use this as a learning tool and they had reflected such lessons when looking at other projects.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and comments on the information provided relating to the Stanford le Hope Interchange project.**

**6. Grays South Regeneration Area: Underpass and Public Realm Option Selection**

The report was presented to the Committee by the Director for Place, during which they heard how the Grays South Regeneration Area comprised a number of projects designed to support the vitality of Grays Town Centre including:

- The replacement of the existing level crossing with a pedestrian underpass.
- The development of the new Civic Centre building.
- The development of new town centre residential accommodation.
- The development of new commercial accommodation.
- Improvements to Grays Beach and the Riverfront.

It was explained the focus was on the progress of the Underpass project, the report described three design options, outlined the current cost position and recommended a preferred option to be taken forward. The preferred option gave the project an opportunity to integrate the scheme into the wider Grays regeneration plans.

Members were advised the recommendation was sought from a public consultation exercise which was undertaken in February and March 2020. It was further advised that Option C: The Plaza scored highest against the spectrum of criteria and the Option Selection Report concluded Option C was the preferred design option.

The results of the public consultation exercise undertaken also mirrored the results of the option selection report. Of the responses received, 77% either agreed or strongly agreed with proposals for an underpass. Furthermore, 81% of respondents selected Option C as their preferred option.

Councillor Kerin Chair of the Committee started off by thanking officers for the report, he further commented that it was an important piece of work due to the amount of freight traffic with the links to Coryton and the riverfront. He stated it was crucial to the redevelopment of the town to make use of the riverfront.

He continued to query mitigation in place for local residents and whether officers felt that the consultation undertaken gave officers a clear engagement with residents.

The Regeneration Programme Manager explained within the town centre there were two strands of consultation, public input into the designs and the statutory planning process. She continued, to comment that unfortunately the level crossing would be closed at some points in the construction, however the team were working with Network Rail to minimise this as far as possible.

The Chair asked for a guarantee that the project would be completed on budget and sought the ways officers were to prevent antisocial behaviour in the area and to ensure that the community forums were included within any future consultations. Officers explained it was too early at this stage to give such guarantees but advised that they were following various actions to ensure that the project is delivered on time and on budget.

Councillor Allen agreed with the Chair in relation to antisocial behaviour in the area and thought whether a public protection order could be put in place or CCTV, he also asked if flood mitigation could be included such as sump pump which would reduce flood risk. The Director of Place explained that community safety was at the forefront of the design. He continued by remarking the water table of the area would be taken into consideration with further details required on the project.

Councillor Allen suggested that perhaps local schools could be involved within the project for example, with the décor inside pathway of the underpass. Officers commented this was a good idea and something they were happy to look into.

Councillor Anderson queried that the consultation only had 47 contribution, he stated he felt this was low and sought officer's opinions on this. The Regeneration Programme Manager confirmed that during the consultation it was clear local residents wanted to engage with officers however did not appear willing to complete the forms required for the consultation. The project team would work to increase the numbers of people engaging in future consultations.

Councillor Gerrish commented he felt the program was an important issue locally and was therefore important to listen to local residents and any concerns. He further commented on concerns with regards to potential costs and increased including potential overspend. The Director of Place stated officers were mindful of the budget for this project and confirmed that they were working with this in mind.

Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery advised that the figures in the report were estimated at present, he continued to advise when the report came back to the Committee at the February meeting next year (2021), officers would be able to confirm the cost figures and would be able show more of an understanding of the budget.

Councillor Potter welcomed the report observing that resident safety appeared to be at the top of the design front for the project. He went on to thank officers for the report.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are asked to Comment on the proposal to recommend Option C to Cabinet as the selected concept to be designed in more detail through the current Development Services Agreement contract with Network Rail.**

**7. Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Committee discussed the items listed on the work programme. It was agreed to keep the February 2021 meeting light as per the work programme. Officers suggested that the September meeting hold the following items:

- Economic Development Strategy
- Local Plan

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration suggested that the Committee might like to include the new Build, Build, Build Scheme on the work programme as it was to hold 4 major projects, for the borough.

**The meeting finished at 8.55 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

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