

Notes of a remote meeting of the East Cambs Bus, Cycle, Walk Working Party held on Wednesday 25th January 2023 at 6.11pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Charlotte Cane
Cllr Lorna Dupré
Cllr Mark Goldsack
Cllr Alan Sharp (Chairman)

OFFICERS

Sally Bonnett – Director Community
Caroline Evans – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Hannah Walker – Trainee Democratic Services Officer

106. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Lis Every and Simon Harries.

107. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

108. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Notes of the meeting held on 30th October 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

109. SUSTRANS WORK UPDATE

The Working Party considered a report (X142, previously circulated) regarding further work that could be undertaken by Sustrans on route feasibility studies. The Director Community reminded Members that Sustrans had 20 days' work available to be utilised by the Council. Feedback had now been received from Parish Councils on the five feasibility reports already prepared, and as a result Sustrans had summarised further potential work. The suggested priorities for the proposed activities were indicated in bold in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

In addition, £150,000 from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) was available for further feasibility studies. The Director Community emphasised that, as revenue funding, it could only be used on studies rather than being available to progress any works already identified. Completion of feasibility studies would mean the Council would have a better chance in the bidding process for Government funding linked to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Sustrans required that the remaining 20 days' work be arranged before the end of the current financial year. The SPF funding would be provided in the next financial year, for use by March 2024. If further funding was required than these two sources, then a report would need to be prepared for the Finance & Assets Committee to consider.

A Member emphasised that although Reach was a small parish, the Reach-Burwell route would significantly benefit Reach residents since the road between Reach and Burwell had dangerous blind bends with no path and buses were only every 2 hours. It was therefore disappointing not to see Reach-Burwell prioritised. The Director Community advised that Sustrans' "Burwell (both routes)" proposal in bold would be looking at improvements within the village of Burwell, such as the proposed one-way system, and this would have a knock-on effect of benefiting Reach residents by addressing all of the connections through Burwell. A similar logic applied to progressing the Fordham one-way designs. She highlighted that in the centre of Reach a 20mph speed limit was proposed meaning similar works were not required there.

Members highlighted the lack of a cycle route through the Ely Leisure Village. Although there was an underpass below the A10 there was nothing further within the Leisure Village or extending towards Little Downham. Again, Members questioned this route not being considered a priority.

There was general agreement that a smaller number of very detailed proposals would be preferable to a larger number of less detailed studies. Therefore, all of the activities listed in 4.1 of the report should be completed if possible in order to maximise the likelihood of successful bidding for funds to implement the proposals. There was some discussion as to whether any of the activities could be completed in-house rather than using Sustrans, for example the suggestions for A3 drawings. The Director Community explained that most were skilled requirements better suited to Sustrans' expertise. However, she would be meeting with the Planning Manager regarding the Burwell-Exning route to progress that connection without further involvement from Sustrans.

In terms of new feasibility studies that could utilise the SPF funding, the Director Community explained that Ely-Stuntney, Mepal-Sutton-Witcham-Witchford, and Isleham-Fordham had been included in both the East Cambridgeshire Cycling and Walking Routes Strategy and the Cambridgeshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP): they were the next three routes in the Council's priority order. Three other routes that were identified in the ECDC strategy but were not part of a wider infrastructure project such as the LCWIP (and therefore were less likely to attract funding) were Ely-Soham, Sutton-Earith and Wilburton-Cottenham. She confirmed to a Member that, if any work was undertaken regarding Wilburton-Cottenham then the Council would liaise with South Cambridgeshire District Council on the project.

It was agreed that Sustrans should be directed to complete the bold activities from section 4.1 of the report using the 20 days yet to be allocated, and that the remaining activities in that section be costed with a view to completing as many as possible using the SPF allocation. It was also agreed that a further meeting should be held if the total cost to complete all the activities was higher than the available £150k, or if there would be an underspend enabling one or more new feasibility studies to be commissioned.

110. EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S DRAFT RESPONSE TO THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY'S DRAFT BUS STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Working Party moved on to discussing the East Cambridgeshire District Council's response to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's Draft Bus Strategy Consultation, and the Bus Strategy document published in November 2022 by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

A Member commented that the term 'accelerated' within the penultimate paragraph on page 1 did not clearly indicate a timescale, and it was important to be realistic about the process and the obstacles that would be faced. The Director Community agreed to amend this to 'as soon as possible'.

There was discussion about the very limited public transport connectivity from East Cambridgeshire into the Haverhill/Linton – Cambridge – Huntingdon – Peterborough public transport network. For example, Sutton was only 15 minutes from the Guided Bus stop in Longstanton but there was no public transport connection between Sutton and Longstanton. Public transport within the District and from the District to neighbouring Districts were both in need of consideration.

The following comments were made regarding the Bus Strategy:

- Within the introduction there was an aspiration to reduce car miles in our region by 15% by 2030; the Council should be clear as to whether or not it agreed with the statement.
- Ambitions for a "London-style network" and a "world-class network" were stated but not explained; the authors should be asked to detail what was meant.
- An "injection of investment" was given as a principle in delivering the Strategy. The Council should have a clear view on this and understand the sources of the investment.
- Specific interventions such as bus priority measures were mentioned; the Council should state their view on them.
- The franchising of buses would be subject to public consultation in 2023 and it was important that the Combined Authority was realistic with residents about the timetable for changes.

- Regarding partnerships and the range of potential operators for bus services, the Council's view on more commercial or voluntary operators should be stated.
- There was no mention of a key issue in the District - services connecting villages to Market Towns. Additionally, with different services at different frequencies, there was potential for people to drive to locations that were served by frequent buses, thereby putting pressure on those areas. It was agreed that the Council's response should reference the Bus Strategy needing to include village – market town connectivity.
- Discounted fares for people up to 25 years old was positive. However, students needing to travel into Cambridge to access sixth forms would pay substantially more than those just needing to travel across the city. In addition to the cost, the bus times and routes effectively limited students in their choice of college/sixth form. Independence and participation in extra-curricular activities was also affected, with the potential a knock-on effect on their CV and job prospects if they were not able to gain suitable skills outside of their studies.
- Tickets between modes of transport, such as “plus-bus” tickets enabling bus transport after a train journey were also not included in the Strategy but were important.

The Director Community confirmed that she would amend the draft response as requested and then send it to Working Party Members for comments, before circulation to all Council Members ahead of the 24th February closing date.

111. WORK PROGRAMME – JANUARY 2023

Members received and noted the Work Programme to January 2023.

The Director Community confirmed that she would arrange for Sustrans to complete the work in bold in paragraph 4.1 of the report and provide costings for all other work in 4.1.

112. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the date of the next meeting would be dependent on when the Sustrans costings came back.

The meeting closed at 7:16pm

Notes of a remote meeting of the East Cambs Bus, Cycle, Walk Working Party held on Thursday 27th July 2023 at 6.00pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Ian Bovingdon
Cllr Lorna Dupré
Cllr Alan Sharp (Chairman)
Cllr Caroline Shepherd

OFFICERS

Sally Bonnett – Director Community
Caroline Evans – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Hannah Walker – Trainee Democratic Services Officer

IN ATTENDANCE

Matthew Barber - Head of Partnerships, Midland and East, Sustrans

113. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr Alan Sharp was nominated by Cllr Ian Bovingdon, seconded by Cllr Caroline Shepherd, and duly appointed as the Chairman for the 2023/24 municipal year.

114. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllrs Colbert and Goldsack.

115. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

116. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Notes of the meeting held on 25th January 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

117. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members received the previously-agreed Terms of Reference, included in the agenda for the benefit of new Working Party Members, and the Chairman provided a brief summary of the history of the Working Party.

118. SUSTRANS PRESENTATION

The Director Community explained that a background document had been provided to reflect the first five studies and additional work carried out in 2022-23, and the further five studies and development work proposed. She introduced Matthew Barber, Sustrans' Head of Partnerships Midland and East, who had been involved with the project from the start, and invited him to address the Working Party.

He thanked Members and the Director Community for their support on the first five studies and the commissioning of further work. He emphasised that interest in active travel was increasing, and that ECDC were ahead of others in having already completed or commissioned studies. The presentation would be available to Working Party Members after the meeting.

In 2022/23 five full feasibility studies had been completed as well as an update to the 2013 Wicken to Soham study. With the remaining funding it had been agreed that more detailed work would take place on three elements:

Ely to Littleport route

Increased scale mapping had been completed for the two key route options under consideration, highlighting elements such as speed limits and route constraints. Responding to Member's comments regarding the poor condition of the road by the river, and therefore the potential costs of that route, Mr Barber explained that the studies were intended purely to look at the feasibility of potential routes and did not yet indicate a preferred option.

Burwell and Fordham village centres (relating to the Fordham to Burwell route and the Swaffham Prior to Burwell route)

Both Parish Councils had shown keen interest in making their communities safer in terms of the speed and volume of traffic in the villages. Department for Transport/Active Travel England funding had been focussed on cities and towns but were now considering more rural proposals if sufficiently impactful.

Detailed interactive reports for options in both village centres had therefore been prepared using ArcGIS, and would be sufficiently detailed for submission to the County Council and the Combined Authority to illustrate what could be possible. The reports included information such as maps and photographs illustrating the flow and speed of traffic at peak and quiet times, traffic count data, pinch points (including their impact on accessibility for wheelchairs, pushchairs etc), street lighting placements and a heat map to show the density of cars and cycle collisions since 2017. LTN 1/20 was referenced in terms of its impact on the potential plans, and Members were informed that shared use

routes were permitted in rural settings. “Healthy Streets” was introduced as a useful qualitative assessment tool that could be used by anyone to consider the condition of a particular street environment. Three options were presented for each village, all of which would require a very significant level of local engagement and Sustrans could assist with that if needed

Five new studies had been commissioned for 2023/24 using funding available to the end of March 2024. Of these, the Ely to Stuntney to Soham (via Barway) study had been started. Surplus funding could be used for engagement activities.

The following points were addressed during discussion on the presentation:

- There was general appreciation for Sustrans’ work and the thoroughness and detail in the studies.
- The first five studies were freely available on the Council’s website. The latest work would be sent from Sustrans to the Director Community to share with Members prior to a further meeting of the Working Party to determine the wider circulation.
 - Engagement with the relevant Ward Councillors and Parish Councils would be vital.
 - The first five studies had initially been shared with all ECDC Members, then there had been a presentation by Sustrans (via Zoom) to District Councillors, relevant Parish Councils, and appropriate representatives from the Combined Authority and from the County Council Cycling Team. Those parishes that would be most directly affected had subsequently participated in more detailed 1:1 sessions. The studies had then been published online. It was agreed that the same process could be considered for the new work and further studies.
- Various planning-related issues were discussed.
 - Future large developments could have an impact on the current pinch points and also create new ones that needed consideration, as had been addressed in the Burwell study.
 - There had been no requirement for an active travel route from Ely to the new Ben’s Yard development – which would have formed part of the proposed Ely-Stuntney-Soham route – as part of the site’s planning permission. To avoid a similar scenario, it was suggested that active travel considerations should be a component of the early work between the District and County Councils regarding the A10 improvements between Milton and Ely; the Chairman committed to passing the suggestion to the newly-formed working group.
 - Members were advised that Active Travel England were now a statutory consultee in the planning process for developments of over 150 homes, and were also trying to directly influence housing developers, both of which would be beneficial. For smaller developments, the Council could utilise the same questions/process that Active Travel England would be using for the larger developments.

The studies commissioned by the Council could be used to secure appropriate S106 or CIL contributions as new developments came forward.

- The purpose of the work with Sustrans was to maximise the number of schemes that were suitable for submission as bids for funding once it became available.
 - The Director Community advised Members that some of the routes aligned with the County Council's LCWIP and ECDC would therefore be in a stronger position than neighbouring councils if funding was secured. The studies would also be useful for the Planning Department to secure S106 contributions and the update to the Soham to Wicken study had been successful in gaining funding from the Combined Authority.

119. WORK PROGRAMME TO MARCH 2024

Members received the Work Programme to March 2024.

It was agreed that the Director Community would circulate the presentation and related studies to all Working Party Members together with a deadline for the submission of questions or comments for Sustrans. She would also liaise with Democratic Services to arrange a meeting in September 2023 to review the responses to those comments and questions and determine the next steps.

120. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date in September 2023 to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 7:00pm.