

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 17 December 2009

agenda item number **7a x**

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS**

### **REPORT FOR PERIOD OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009**

#### **The Floods and Water Management Bill**

1. The Floods and Water Management Bill was included in the Queen's speech in November and is designed to implement the recommendations of Sir Michael Pitt's report into the summer floods of 2007. The Bill gives local authorities in England and Wales the responsibility to take the lead in local flood risk management.
2. The County Council will begin by drawing up a register of all drains, culverts and flood risk management assets and will lead work with other organisations such as the Environment Agency, water companies and drainage boards.
3. The County Council already has a number of plans in place and this includes a proposal to invest an extra £3.4m over the next three years to address drainage and flooding problems, particularly the cleaning of the county's highways drainage and 128,000 gullies. Blocked drainage ditches and gullies can be a major factor in the cause of localised flooding and at least £600k is proposed to be spent in 2010/11 in gully cleaning which will allow resources to be targeted in areas prone to flooding. £500k will also be spent each year improving the county's hundreds of miles of highway drains, some of which are more than 100 years old and struggle to cope with the number and intensity of storms in recent years.

#### **Concessionary Fares for the Over 60's and Disabled Persons**

4. Following the successful launch of the England wide travel concession in April 2008, there has been significant pressure on the Department for Transport to re-visit the funding distribution allocated for this entitlement.

Although the special grant distribution for 2010/11 was published, it has been agreed to consult on a revised distribution now that the extent of additional travel is becoming clearer. This should smooth out shortfalls reported by several authorities.

5. The proposed new distribution does not directly affect the County Council but does address shortfalls experienced by our district / borough councils with whom we jointly operate the Nottinghamshire scheme. If adopted the new distribution will mean that the Nottinghamshire Districts will receive an additional £490k in 2010/11 which will offset the monies they would have been required to find from their own budgets. Each of our district / borough Councils will be completing the consultation response document expressing support.
6. I have written to the Department for Transport fully supporting the proposed distribution and have requested that consideration be given to the inclusion of tram services in the national concession. The consultation closes on 30 December.

#### **Interactive Speed Signs Policy**

7. The use of interactive 'Your speed' signs was pioneered in Nottinghamshire. The signs are very popular with local communities and can reduce vehicle speeds by up to 5mph. As a result there is significant demand for the signs to be introduced throughout the county and so far there are around 140 signs in place with a further 15 mobile signs that can be used for short periods in response to particular speeding concerns.
8. To ensure that the ongoing needs of local communities can be met I have approved a number of changes to current policy including:
  - a relaxation of the criteria for assessment – this will allow at least a further 27 signs to be introduced
  - private funding for permanent signs will be accepted regardless of whether the criteria are met subject to payment of full purchase, installation and maintenance costs
  - priority will be given to sites within 30 mph speed limits
9. I am sure that a widespread programme of interactive signs will reduce the number of speeding drivers and improve the quality of life for residents, pedestrians and cyclists.

#### **Improvements to Pavement Maintenance**

10. The Council is putting an extra £1.3m into resurfacing pavements in 2009/10 and as part of this programme it is planning to use a resurfacing

machine that recycles road materials. Similar machines have been used on Nottinghamshire roads in the past, but this is the first time that the machines have been small enough to use on pavements.

11. The new machine will be used in Southwell and if the job is successful, this method will be used on other pavements across the county. This will deliver significant savings in materials and fuel which would have been needed to transport new materials to site.

### **Mile End Road, Colwick**

12. Mile End Road is one of two access roads for the Colwick Industrial Estate to the south of the A612 Colwick Loop Road. It also serves as the sole access for a residential area of approximately 380 properties. Local residents have been campaigning for the introduction of a weight restriction for many years and in June 2007 a feasibility study was undertaken into the effects of prohibiting heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) from using Mile End Road.
13. If Mile End Road was restricted in both directions, a significant volume of traffic would be transferred to the junction of the A612 and Private Road No 1 which serves as an alternative access to the industrial estate. The study demonstrated that it is not economically viable to improve this junction to a standard that would allow it to accommodate this extra traffic. However, the study did show that a weight restriction on HGVs leaving the industrial estate via Mile End Road would be feasible. Because the effects of this one way restriction on local businesses would be difficult to assess, the restriction was introduced on an experimental basis. It came into force in December 2008.
14. A comparison of before and after surveys show that the number of HGVs travelling along Mile End Road has dramatically reduced. However, the surveys also show that HGV movements in general in the area have reduced, possibly due to the economic downturn.
15. All residential properties and 120 businesses on the industrial estate were consulted and a total of 12 objections were received. The main grounds for objection were the detrimental affect on local businesses, increased congestion, road safety issues due to the transference of traffic and concerns regarding enforcement and contravention. I have given careful consideration to the objections raised, but I have decided that the weight restriction will be made permanent.

### **Community Consultation**

16. Residents and businesses in a number of Nottinghamshire towns, including Stapleford, Eastwood, Selston, Jacksdale and Underwood, are being asked to suggest improvements that would make their towns more accessible and encourage people to shop locally. We are asking for comments on such things as buses, parking and parking restrictions, cycle and pedestrian routes, seating and lighting. Once all the questionnaires have been assessed work will begin in January to develop improvements and it is hoped that schemes can be put in place over the next few years.

### **Road Safety Christmas Initiative**

17. Officers in Road Safety have launched a campaign this Christmas urging shoppers to think about safety accessories such as helmets, lights and reflectors when buying bikes as presents. Advice is available on how to set up lights and reflectors correctly to ensure that children and adults stay safe when cycling on dark winter nights.

### **'Travel Trumps'**

18. Officers in Road Safety have developed an innovative way of encouraging more children to travel to school using greener transport. So far some 23,000 pupils from 119 schools across the county have signed up to 'Travel Trumps'.
19. The scheme is based on the traditional children's card game 'Top Trumps'. Pupils are issued with a journey log and collect cards as they complete sustainable journeys such as walking, cycling, car sharing and public transport. The cards feature cartoon characters and rate each of their journeys for such things as environmental impact, speed and alertness, thereby helping the children to learn more about sustainable travel.

### **UK Bus Awards 2009**

20. I am pleased to report that Nottingham City Transport won the Winning New Customers Award at this year's Department for Transport UK Bus Awards. NCT won the award for growing patronage in West Bridgford and officers from the County Council's Transport Services team worked in partnership with NCT on the campaign and improvements to their services.
21. The campaign recognised the car as the main competitor and sought to replicate car luxuries and benefits by updating the bus product and image.

This involved the introduction of a fleet of 22 new buses and an extensive advertising campaign.

### **Meetings**

22. As part of the general work of my portfolio I have attended a number of meetings over recent weeks:
- Meeting with Trent Barton to discuss transport issues
  - Meeting with The Pensioners Action Group
  - Meeting with The Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce
  - Meeting with GOEM to discuss Local Transport Plan progress
  - I have also met with various county, district and parish councillors and members of the public to discuss transport and highways issues in communities across the county

COUNCILLOR RICHARD JACKSON  
Cabinet Member for Transport & Highways