

NORTH AREA COMMITTEE

18 November 2021
6.30 - 9.31 pm

Present

Area Committee Members: Councillors Scutt (Vice-Chair), Bird, Dalzell, Gawthrope Wood, Sargeant, Sheil, Smart, Todd-Jones, Bird and Meschini

Officers:

Anti-Social Behaviour Officer: Louise Willerton
Strategy and Economy Manager: Caroline Hunt
Senior Planning Policy Officer: Terry de Souza
Committee Manager: Sarah Steed
Meeting Producer: Liam Martin

External Presenters

Police Sergeant: Shawn Emms
GCP Representative, Peter Blake
GCP Representative, David Charlesworth
Network Rail representatives, Stephen Deaville, Charles Baker, Anne Dugdale

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

21/26/NAC Welcome, Introduction and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Bond, Collis, McQueen, O'Reilly and County Councillor Cox Condron.

21/27/NAC Declarations Of Interest

Member	Item	Interest
Gawthrope Wood	21/31/NAC	Personal: Plot holder on Howgate Road allotments.

21/28/NAC Notes of meeting

The notes of the meetings held on 2 September 2021 were noted.

21/29/NAC Policing and Safer Neighbourhoods

The Committee received a report from Sergeant Emms regarding policing and safer neighbourhoods trends.

The report outlined actions taken since the last reporting period. The current emerging issues/neighbourhood trends for each ward were also highlighted (see report for full details). Previous local areas of concern and engagement activity noted in the report were:

- ASB and dangerous driving across the north of the city (including Fen Road and the High Street) and NO2 canisters;
- Street based drug dealing including cuckooing; and
- Youth and knife crime.

The virtual Area Committee would not be making a decision, so would not vote on priorities set by the Police. The Police reported back on the local areas of concern they were currently focussing on. Councillors and members of the public could not change these, but they could suggest ideas/issues for the Police to focus on.

In response to Members' discussion Sargeant Emms provided the following responses:

- i. Confirmed it was an offence to drive under the influence of drugs. Noted an issue with NO2 was that it dissipated through the body almost instantly therefore it was difficult to prosecute people for driving under the influence of this. Noted that the police had other ways to tackle this issue as other offences could be being committed at the same time as driving under the influence of NO2.
- ii. Was aware of a couple of reports of damaged vehicles on the High Street in Chesterton but was not aware that this was an on-going issue.
- iii. Was aware of a gathering point for youths near Tesco (in Chesterton?) but was not aware of any specific recorded complaints either from the store or from residents.
- iv. At the neighbourhood level, the [Home | Police.uk \(www.police.uk\)](http://www.police.uk) website allows for swift access to local crime and anti-social behaviour data at street level. The website can display crimes on a map as well as in chart format, along with trend lines.
- v. Police Officers were visiting schools to speak with children about knife crime and trying to divert children away from crime. This initiative was still in its early stages, so it was too early to comment whether there had been any impact from the school visits.
- vi. The Police regularly worked with partners including the Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Team and City Homes at the City Council, Cambridge

- Regional College and Romsey Mill to try and reach out to peers and family members of offenders to try and divert them from criminal activities.
- vii. There was a Department wide operation regarding cycle crime which was managed by the South Team Sergeant. Confirmed was aware of the 'Facebook Stolen Bikes' group but unfortunately the information published by the group was not sufficient for the courts to accept as evidence. A property had been identified through the group and Police were investigating whether this was being used as part of a stolen bike operation.
 - viii. Agreed small motorbikes did tend to be noisier.
 - ix. Police officers needed to witness poor driving to be able to successfully prosecute someone.
 - x. Operation Staple included ASB driving.
 - xi. Where individuals / families appeared to be on the periphery of crime, they would be assessed by officers and those at risk would be visited by Police Officers to try and divert them from crime.
 - xii. The North Cambridge Consultation Meeting was a pilot scheme which had worked well and a second consultation with residents about their concerns was planned for 30 November. Thought invitations had been sent out but would follow this up with colleagues.

Action: Would look into the publicity about the second North Cambridge Consultation Meeting and would ensure that invitations to this event were sent out / made available.

In response to Members' discussion the ASB Officer provided the following response:

- i. The City Council have delivered Cambs Against County Lines sessions in schools to raise awareness about county lines and criminal exploitation. Most recently, officers from the Community Safety Team delivered a session at Chesterton Community College.

A member of the public asked a number of questions, as set out below.

- i. HRARA appreciated the work initiative regarding begging by the Co-op on Histon Road. However was aware that the same problem existed by Aldi. Witnessed an employee having to run out of the shop and stop an abusive drunk beggar from offending a customer. Asked the employee when he returned if this was an ongoing issue and he replied yes. Did not think it should be the responsibility of the employees to police this issue.

- ii. Wanted to ask the Streetlife Working Group to include Aldi beggars in their multiagency meetings.

The ASB Officer confirmed that the above issue would be taken on board and would be discussed at the Streetlife Working Group the following week. Encouraged members of the public to report any concerns to the Police and also confirmed that ASB Officers were happy to liaise with members of the public. they could be contacted on asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk.

21/30/NAC City Access Consultation by Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) - NAC

The Chair of HRARA tabled the following questions which related to GCP projects.

1. Referred to agenda item 3 Notes of meeting, minute reference 21/24/NAC on pages 11-12 of the agenda.
 - a. At the HRARA AGM on 12 October discussions were held with County Councillor Hilary Cox-Condron who agreed she would contact relevant staff to get a confirmation that the Speed Camera was in force and working
 - b. Regarding Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) 20 mph, this issue was subsequently raised at the West Central Area committee meeting on 9 September page 5 point i in the minutes. The reply from the GCP representative was that a dialogue had begun.
 - c. On 4 November 2021, an e-mail was sent to Paul van de Bulk, regarding the Highways and Transport Committee meeting which was copied to County Councillor Cox-Condron and Councillors Nethsingha and Scutt. The reply from Paul van de Bulk stated that *'We first have to consult on the TRO and I think we will take it to the GCP Board along with a couple of other TROs we need to finalise for Histon Road. My Project Assistant is working with the Highways Team to finalise all the wording and I am pushing them to publish as soon as possible. I will ask him to give me a time line'*.
 - d. HRARA has not received any time line. Asked when the TRO would be ready and when the consultation would start.
2. Referred to agenda item 3, Notes of meeting, minute reference 21/24/NAC on pages 8 of the agenda.
 - a. The fully commissioned signalling system had now been installed and several trial tests had been made. The last trial had improved the queueing on Histon Road before turning into the lanes for Castle Street

and Huntingdon Road. However, there was still substantial queues during morning rush hours.

- b. Asked if there were further trials planned to improve the Histon/Victoria/Huntingdon Roads signalling system.
- c. Gilbert Road Junction - the new cyclop junction was opened at the same time as the Histon Road opening ceremony although it was left with many details incomplete including:
 - i. The bypass cycle lane in the road was luring people/children to use the road crossing and in the middle of the road turning into Warwick Road.
 - ii. A temporary sign for 'No right turn' had been necessary to post in the cycle lanes to prevent crossing into the pedestrian lanes and the road.
 - iii. One of the pedestrian lanes had the push button too far away from the walkway. This was particularly difficult for people who were partially sighted since the signals were using the rotating cone tactile equipment and not a sound system.
 - iv. Asked if there had been any monitoring of the cyclops junction as criss-crossing and cycling in the wrong direction was quite frequent.

3. Referred to agenda item 8, the Open Forum

- a. HRARA had its first AGM in two years on 12 October 2021, at Mayfield School. County Councillor Cox-Condron was invited and attended the meeting. Even though the aim was to focus on the future after all construction work, most of the questions from the public concentrated on roadworks and the impact on the community. Some of the concerns had been mentioned in previous points. The return of the buses was welcome especially as these went to the train station and Addenbrooke's on one bus. The temporary 20mph speed limit which slowed down the traffic was appreciated. The worst part had been when road construction took during place during both night-time and daytime, the constant criss-crossing from one side of the road to the other because work was being undertaken on both sides of the road raised safety issues for pedestrians in walking on the gravel, clicking utility covers every time a car passes, fence with climbers where the climbers have died and bindweed taking over, etc and the constant noise. Asked when the road would finally be finished. The GCP Project Manager had been made aware of all the details that needed fixing before construction finished.
- b. In the GCP Joint Assembly Agenda 18-11-2021 it stated that *Construction of the project is now complete (as of November 2021)*

therefore all of the 2021/22 budget has now been committed. It was not anticipated that additional GCP funding would be required.

- c. Noted that construction and final preparation of the road had not been finished. Asked if there would be any mitigation funds available, if not from GCP then from the Cambridge County Council.
4. Referred to agenda item 9, Committee Action Sheet point 4 '21/24/NAC GCP Update on Histon Road and Milton Road', where the GCP Officer requested the County Council "*run some enhanced enforcement following completion of the project*".
 - a. Noted that the latest sign on the road for night works stated that these would take place on Roseford Road on 12 November for 3 nights. This date had passed and nothing had been done. Asked when the official inspection would take place. Asked if there would still be room and funds for any mitigation if needed after the inspection.
 - b. Residents were grateful for the present public bus service however the 8H bus signs in the outbound lane needed to be taken away so as not to cause confusion.

Response from GCP representative:

- i. The speed camera needed to be recommissioned and potentially relocated as a result of the construction works and the layout of the road changing.
- ii. The TRO was currently being drafted and it was hoped that it would be tabled for approval by the GCP Board at their March 2022 meeting.
- iii. Had asked the signalling contractor to look at the signalling system at Histon / Victoria / Huntingdon Roads and this would be done over the coming weeks. It was normal once a traffic system was installed for there to be a couple of tweaks once the system was being bedded in.
- iv. A temporary sign 'for no right turn' was necessary at the Gilbert Road junction as the traffic lights which needed to be put on the cycle post were not available. These were on order and would be installed once received. The cyclops junction would be monitored in the coming months.
- v. Following construction works on Histon Road, confirmed that an 'as built survey' would be completed, and a final road safety inspection would be carried out.
- vi. Works were meant to be carried out on 12 November unfortunately due to a delay with materials the works had to be deferred until 26 November.
- vii. Confirmed they had asked the contractor to remove the H8 bus signs.

The Committee received a presentation from officers at the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) regarding the City Access Consultation which was now known as 'Making Connections: Have your say on Greener Travel in Greater Cambridgeshire'. Further information regarding the consultation could be found via: [Making Connections - have your say on greener travel in Greater Cambridge | Consult Cambridgeshire \(engagementhq.com\)](https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/making-connections)

The GCP Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. As part of the consultation, officers at the GCP were carrying out an integrated impact assessment which meant that consideration would be given as to whether any of the proposed actions would result in a perverse outcome ie: it was cheaper for families to drive into Cambridge rather than using the bus, this wasn't right as the outcome wanted to encourage the use of public transport so this issue needed to be looked at.
- ii. Agreed disabled bus pass conditions needed to be looked at if this deterred people from travelling by public transport during certain times.
- iii. Stated that cleaner electric and accessible buses needed to be provided.
- iv. Agreed that the benefits of the proposals needed to be articulated both to Cambridge residents as well as residents travelling into Cambridge.
- v. Would speak with their Communication Team about ensuring that the consultation was provided in alternative formats so that people were not put off from responding or being unable to respond.
- vi. The cost of any proposed scheme would depend on the proposals made (i.e.: what was charged and when).
- vii. Noted the comment about having a front entrance to the bus and a separate exit at the back of the bus.

Action: GCP Officer to confirm what alternative consultation methods were available for those who did not have English as their first language or were not digitally enabled.

21/31/NAC Greater Cambridge Local Plan - consultation

The Committee received a report from the Strategy and Economy Manager regarding the Greater Cambridge Local Plan First Proposals consultation. Further information regarding the consultation could be found via: [Greater Cambridge Local Plan \(greatercambridgeplanning.org\)](https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org)

Members of the public asked a number of questions, as set out below.

1. With a drop in birth rate, migration and young people not being able to get mortgages as rates rise, who would buy these houses.

Response: The evidence base did look at the changing demographic and the First Proposals for the plan were informed by those factors.

2. Was there a need to address the fact that people who were born in Cambridge cannot afford to live in the town they grew up in, should this not be the immediate focus.

Response: Recognised that Cambridge was an expensive place to live and that houses needed to be provided alongside jobs. Planning policy required the provision of 40% affordable housing alongside any new development.

3. How can you define and guarantee affordable housing?

Response: The term 'Affordable Housing' was defined by Central Government and included social rented, affordable rented, shared ownership etc. The Local Planning Authority sought to secure as much affordable housing as was reasonable and which could be delivered.

4. With businesses choosing to incorporate more working from home, it made sense that less office spaces was needed. Asked if the shift of working was home was being built into the plan.

Response: There was already a trend of people starting to work more from home rather than working in the office, the pandemic accelerated this change. The consultation was clear that the evidence was carried out pre-pandemic and would be kept under review as the plan is developed, felt it was too soon to review at the moment whilst the pandemic was still on-going.

21/32/NAC Presentation by Network Rail regarding the Ely Area Catchment Enhancement project and relationship with Fen Road crossing

The Committee received a report from Network Rail Officers regarding the Ely Area Catchment Enhancement project, which was a scheme to increase both freight and passenger services which run through the Ely area. Officers also spoke to the project in relation to the Fen Road crossing. Network Rail's presentation slides could be found via the meeting webpage: [Agenda for North Area Committee on Thursday, 18th November, 2021, 6.30 pm - Cambridge Council](#)

In response to Members' questions Network Rail Representatives' said the following:

- i. Network Rail had been exploring future proofing the capacity of the rail junction. Ely was a bottleneck for trains and was a challenge to overcome. The Department for Transport had asked Network Rail to look

at increasing the capacity through Ely to 10 trains per hour, Network Rail was looking at capacity above that. The preliminary results suggested that Network Rail could deliver more capacity than the Department for Transport asked for, however there would be other constraints on the network which would need to be addressed.

- ii. Was aware that Fen Road was the only vehicular access to houses that side of the railway line and understood residents' concerns and frustrations regarding the length of time the barriers were down. Should an emergency vehicle be waiting at the level crossing, the Signaller should see this via the CCTV and can take a decision to help the vehicle cross the crossing quicker. Network Rail had explored what could be done to reduce barrier downtime. All technical solutions had been explored to reduce the barrier downtime. There were no technical solutions to reduce the barrier downtime.
- iii. There was a wider issue, Network Rail officers had presented the options available regarding the Ely Area Catchment Enhancement scheme. Other work had been undertaken to make sure that they were minimising the length of time the barrier was down.
- iv. Network Rail responded to the North East Cambridge Area Action Plan (NECAAP) and said that land should be reserved to facilitate connections. Thought some of the plans involved a foot crossing near the level crossing. Would be willing to work with third parties. Would discuss issues raised with colleagues. Network Rail's comment on the NECAAP consultation was not a commitment, the comment said land should be set aside.
- v. The Fen Road crossing was a complex issue. Network Rail were not saying that it was for other parties to solve problems for Network Rail. In an ideal world would want to close level crossings as they were a risky structure to have on the rail network because of the interface with members of the public however they needed to have a credible alternative available to be able to close a level crossing. The issue was the availability of land where alternative access could be provided and to understand what options were available and whether Highways would adopt any such land.

Action: Network Rail agreed to discuss with the Councils (in response to request from Cllr Bird and Cllr Hawkins (SCDC)) regarding Fen Road crossing / alternative road / bridge.

Members of the public asked a number of questions, as set out below.

1. What steps were being taken to lessen the time that the Fen Road Level Crossing was down, waiting for trains to leave Cambridge North station heading south, for most of which time the trains were still sitting in the station.

Network Rail response: All technical solutions had been explored to reduce the barrier downtime. There were no technical solutions to reduce the barrier downtime

2. The problem was less the total down time but the length of individual down times which causes frustration. This had got better, but can still be a problem. When the barriers were down for 1 minute, this was not too much of a problem, 8 minutes plus was very frustrating. Asked if there were any incidents or risk factors, or a threshold for closure of the Fen Road Crossing. Felt the danger from Fen Road Crossing was less from train accidents than road accidents arising from drivers' frustration.

Network Rail response: The safety of level crossings was regularly reviewed, the frequency of reviews depended on a number of factors including accidents or near misses.

21/33/NAC Open Forum

Members of the public asked a number of questions, as set out below.

1. Milton Road Library and This Land.
 - i. Milton Road Library had been in Cambridgeshire public hands for as long as residents could remember. Residents now learned that prior to the current administration, the Milton Road Library site (freehold and building) was sold to a company originally called Cambridgeshire Housing Investment Company (CHIC), now known as 'This Land'. The library and community rooms were now subject to a lease to the County Council, originally for a 25-year term which had been extended under the current administration.
 - ii. Residents were concerned that a public asset, and a library at that, had passed out of public hands into a development company which, although Cambridgeshire County Council was the 100% shareholder, was in the process of selling the Milton Road Library site. This meant that the library would no longer have any connection with Cambridgeshire County Council

apart from the lease. In addition, the City Council which granted £100,000 for the community rooms, had no assurance that when the lease expired that public investment in the West Chesterton community would remain.

- iii. Local residents had raised concerns about This Land. Although the County Council is 100% shareholder of This Land, residents are told that because of the 'arms length' position, the County Council had no effective power or possibility of any exercise of insight into This Land's operations. This was troubling as the flats above the library had been vacant for well over two years, at a time of acute housing shortage. The contention was that sale would yield a better return on an unoccupied property; however, it meant that there had been no income realised and nothing to offset maintenance and other necessary costs to keep the property functional and in good repair. The County Council had been engaged in lending not insignificant sums to This Land which may appear to have been the way the operation had kept afloat. Directors' fees were being paid out and there appeared to be a lengthy list of directors, and much coming and going amongst them.
- iv. It appeared that the County Council was not without any power to exercise some control in respect of This Land and referred to Article 3 of the Articles of Association 'Reserve Power', which stated 'The Shareholders may, by special resolution, direct the Directors to take, or refrain from taking, specified action'.
- v. Asked North Area Committee the following four questions:
- vi. What steps, if any, were being taken or could be taken to save this vital public asset, Milton Road Library, for future generations.
- vii. Why was the County Council not exercising power under Article 3(3) to halt the sale of Milton Road Library, at least until the conclusion of the External Review.
- viii. What steps, if any, were being taken, or could be taken to protect the City's investment of £100,000 in Milton Road Library Community Rooms.
- ix. What was the breakdown in the payments of non-executive fees, to whom had the monies gone, and in what precise amounts, and for what? Asked for clarification of the figures provided by Councillor Scutt below.

Councillor Scutt noted that in 2021, £342,500 had been paid in Directors' fees and in 2019, £227,917 was paid out in Directors fees and in 2021, £1,486,684 had been paid in wages. In 2019 £1,356,545 had been paid in wages. There appeared to be an increase in wages despite a reduction in personnel.

Councillor Meschini advised that there were legal issues concerning Milton Road Library and This Land Limited, which prevented the County Council from acting immediately. She would be happy to compose a more detailed answer and to provide a copy of the frequently asked questions (FAQs), which was an output of the meeting with Friends of Milton Road Library. The County Council were committed to the Milton Road Library continuing and had a duty to provide a library.

Action: Councillor Meschini to provide a more detailed response to the questions regarding Milton Road Library and This Land and provide copies of the FAQs which were being drafted following a meeting with Friends of Milton Road Library.

2. Town Green – Castle Mound and grassed forecourt.

- i. The application made by former County Councillors' Claire Richards and Jocelyne Scutt and City Councillor Katie Thornburrow for Castle Mound and Shire Hall Grassed Forecourt to be declared a town green was currently advertised for objections to be lodged. The details were in the Central Library and there was a notice at the foot of the Mound.
- ii. Asked the Committee to provide an update on the application and to advise whether residents could still provide supporting statements for the town green.

Councillor Scutt responded that Castle Mound was covered by the Heritage Act and the route up the mound had been preserved by ramblers. The grassed area in front of the mound was not protected. Suffolk County Council was the authority responsible for making a decision on designating Castle Mound as a Town and Village Green. Advised the application was at the stage where people could make objections to the application however she did not see why members of the public couldn't still express their support. Asked for any members of the public who wanted to express their support to contact her.

21/34/NAC Committee Action Sheet

The Action Sheet was noted and an updated copy could be viewed at the following link under 'Committee Action Sheet – updated post committee.

[Agenda for North Area Committee on Thursday, 18th November, 2021, 6.30 pm - Cambridge Council](#)

21/35/NAC City Centre COVID Recovery Project Update - Area Committee Briefing Note

The Briefing note was noted.

The meeting ended at 9.31 pm

CHAIR

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