

# HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS WATFORD JOINT MEMBER PANEL

10 JULY 2012

Present: Borough Councillor I Sharpe (Chair)  
County Councillor S Giles-Medhurst (Vice-Chair)  
County Councillors N Bell, I Brandon, K Hastrick, D Scudder  
and M Watkin  
Borough Councillors  
A Burtenshaw, S Johnson, A Khan, R Martins and S Rackett

Officers:	David Swan	Hertfordshire Highways
	Andy Melville	Hertfordshire Highways
	Stewart Liddle	Hertfordshire Highways
	Jane Custance	Head of Planning
	Sandra Hancock	Committee and Scrutiny Officer

## 1 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED –

1. that Borough Councillor Sharpe be elected Chair for the 2012/13 Municipal Year.
2. that County Councillor Giles-Medhurst be elected Vice-Chair for the 2012/13 Municipal Year.

## 2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There was a change of committee membership for this meeting: Borough Councillor Burtenshaw replaced Borough Councillor J Brown.

## 3 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

There were no disclosures of interest.

## 4 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2012 were submitted and signed.

5           **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

6           **PETITIONS, TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS AND LOCAL ISSUES**

The Panel received a report of the District Manager setting out the current status of petitions, information on any objections to Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) and other local issues.

Petition – Rosslyn Road

Following a question from County Councillor Bell, the District Manager advised that the cost of the consultation and TRO would be in the region of £4,000. He added that the funding had been secured.

Petitions Received – St James Road

The District Manager reported that officers were recommending that an experimental TRO should be put in place and then monitored to assess any impact the proposed one-way system in St James Road would have on the area. If residents were not satisfied with the scheme it could then be removed.

The District Manager explained that the experimental TRO could be in place for up to 18 months, however, he would prefer an initial period of six months during which time monitoring would take place and people could comment on the scheme. Following the experiment, if it was found to be suitable, it would be possible to proceed to a formal TRO.

Members were disappointed in the number of responses to the informal consultation, particularly in comparison to the original petition.

The Vice-Chair, County Councillor Giles-Medhurst, suggested that additional signage might be required at the junction of Wiggerhall Road and Cardiff Road. The signage would need to state that there was no access to St James Road.

The District Manager responded that this would need to be considered. The area was very self-contained; local residents would know access arrangements. Officers did not want to increase any street clutter.

The Vice-Chair replied that if it became a permanent scheme, the information could be included in the existing street furniture.

Borough Councillor Dhindsa, Ward Councillor for Vicarage, stated that he did not feel signage would be necessary.

**RESOLVED –**

that the petition updates be noted.

### Objections to Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)

There were no Traffic Regulation Order objections for consideration

### Local issues – Update on National Grid Gas Works

The District Manager provided the Panel with an update on the National Grid gas works. He informed Members that there was a very recent incident in Nascot where the company had started work ahead of schedule. The company had not received approval to do this and could be fined.

County Councillor Watkin added that the local residents had not received any information and he had personally circulated a letter to all the residents in the street.

Following a question from the Vice-Chair, the District Manager advised that Ward and Division Members would be informed by the Network Manager the exact dates when works would be starting.

The Vice-Chair commented that the company had already started working in Green Lane and he had not been informed of the start date. This work was linked to the closure of Oxhey Road during the school holidays.

The District Manager informed the Panel that there would be two weeks' advanced notice of any road closures.

### Local issues – update on use of bus lanes by Hackney Carriages

The District Manager updated the Panel on the experimental TRO which had begun on Monday 9 July. The signage was still to be put in place.

Members welcomed the news that hackney carriage vehicles could use the bus lanes previously discussed.

The Vice-Chair noted that in future if there were any objections to TROs only the relevant County Councillor would be consulted.

The District Manager agreed that with this particular TRO County Councillors Giles-Medhurst and Watkin would be consulted about objections. The County Councillors could contact other local Councillors if they wished to get other Members' opinions.

The District Manager informed the Panel that initially enforcement would be carried out visually. Once the full range of information technology was in place, the use of the bus lanes could be monitored more. CCTV and ANPR cameras were located around the Town Centre and could be used. All valid vehicles' registration details would be added to the database. Once this was complete other vehicles using the bus lanes would receive penalty notices.

## Local issues – School crossing patrols

The Vice-Chair informed the Panel that he wished to raise an urgent matter. The following week the County Council would make a decision about school crossing patrols. There were a number of patrols across the county, where the patrol would not be funded by the County Council once the current person stopped. In Watford this was relevant to Leavesden Green School. He advised that Opposition Councillors had objected to the proposal. The County Council proposal meant that a crossing patrol could only continue if a volunteer was found or if the school funded the position. He felt that the school crossing patrol should continue. He asked whether the Panel wished to make a formal objection.

The Vice-Chair added that the reason for the change was to do with a formula; if a school crossing patrol did not meet the criteria then the service would not be continued once the current person left. The formula was based on the number of pedestrians and vehicles using the road. The audit had been carried out in September 2011 and Leavesden Green School had failed to meet the criteria. He added that there would be a future saving of approximately £3,000 per site.

Members expressed their concern about the loss of the crossing patrol once the current person retired. They felt that child safety was paramount. It was noted that many schools in Watford were being expanded to meet the increased need for school places. Some Members were surprised that the site had not been assessed irrespective of the number of vehicles passing the school.

The Vice-Chair proposed that a letter objecting to the proposal should be prepared and sent to the Cabinet at Hertfordshire County Council.

On being put to the Panel it was AGREED.

RESOLVED –

1. that the officer's report be noted.
2. that a letter be sent to the Cabinet at Hertfordshire County Council objecting to the proposal to stop funding the school crossing patrol at Leavesden Green School once the current person stops or retires.

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## **SECTION 106 CONTRIBUTIONS**

The Panel received a report of the Area Highway Development Control Manager including allocations for the coming financial year and details of new contributions received by the County Council.

County Councillor Scudder noted that Old North Western Avenue was entirely with County Councillor Brandon's division and not in his, Woodside Stanborough.

### Appendix A – Schemes submitted for approval in 2012/13

The Vice-Chair noted that the vehicle activated signs for the A41 were not included in Appendix A, schemes submitted for approval in 2012/13. He had understood that approval had been granted for the signs.

The District Manager confirmed that the signs had been granted approval in the previous financial year. The order had been placed.

Borough Councillor Khan referred to the Callowland Parking Study and asked which roads would be included. He explained that he was concerned as it could impact on roads in his ward, including Ashby Road and Sussex Road, which were known locally as the 'ladder' roads.

County Councillor Brandon responded that the consultation would cover the entire Callowland Ward.

The Head of Planning added that consultation had taken place with residents in the 'ladder' roads some time ago. She commented that the ward boundary was in effect just a line on the map. It would be necessary to consider the effect on other areas if any parking scheme was introduced in Callowland. She assured Members that officers were aware of the roads located off Leavesden Road.

County Councillor Scudder noted that he had requested an upgrade for the bus stop on St Albans Road by Rochester Drive; however, it had not been included in the list. He had discussed the matter with the officer. He added that following the accident in Garston Lane the bus stop near the junction with St Albans Road would not be upgraded and therefore the stop near Rochester Drive would be done instead.

Borough Councillor Burtenshaw asked for clarification on timescales for the installation of the bus shelter in High Road, Leavesden.

The District Manager advised that he would contact the officer and report back to the Members.

### Appendix B – Local use of £250,000

The Vice-Chair suggested that no further schemes should be added to the list until the full costs of the Phase 2 of the Old North Western Avenue scheme were known. This was agreed.

### Appendix C – Section 106 Traffic Light report

The District Manager explained that the 'Refund Date', column 4 of the appendix, related to the date by which the Section 106 (S106) needed to be spent.

The Panel asked the District Manager about a number of the possible schemes listed in the appendix.

Following a question about the S106 funding from the Rainbow House development in Water Lane, the District Manager explained that where 'CROXLEY RAIL LINK' was listed in capitals as a possible scheme, it would be given first chance to receive the funds.

The Vice-Chair asked for clarification on the proposed scheme in relation to the development at 83 The Harebreaks.

The District Manager and the Head of Planning explained about the proposals. The District Manager advised that he would arrange for the description to be amended.

RESOLVED –

that the report and the Panel's comments be noted

## 8 **IWP FORWARD WORKS PROGRAMME - FOOTWAY AND DRAINAGE BIDS**

The Panel received a report of the Lead Assistant District Manager seeking Members' bids for footway and drainage works. The District Manager advised the Panel that bids would be considered at a meeting on Friday 13 July. He confirmed that the footways in the Foxhill area had already been included in the Integrated Works Programme.

RESOLVED –

that Members email their bids to the Lead Assistant District Manager or their Assistant District Manager.

## 9 **INTEGRATED WORKS PROGRAMME & PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Panel received a report of the Lead Assistant District Manager which summarised the progress on the delivery of the Integrated Works Programme. The District Manager apologised that Appendices B to E had not been included in the original agenda. He advised that the Active Works List repeated the information contained in the monthly update emailed to Councillors.

### Appendix B – Casualty Reduction Scheme

Following a question about the worn anti-skid surface on the A405, the Lead Assistant District Manager advised that it would be resurfaced as part of the scheme.

The Vice-Chair asked for details of the plans to alleviate the flooding problems in the High Road.

The District Manager replied that the gulleys had been cleared along the High Road leading up to the roundabout.

#### Appendix C – Integrated Transport Projects

Borough Councillor Dhindsa asked that local councillors were notified of the plans for the 20 mph zone in Park Avenue, including the details of the speed humps. He added that when the lamp posts were changed the CPZ signs were removed and not replaced on the new lamp posts.

The District Manager assured Members that Ward Councillors would be notified. He would investigate the problem with the signs.

The Vice-Chair asked that the overgrown shrubbery was cut back at the Dome roundabout.

County Councillor Hastrick stated that the pedestrian crossing on the A41, between Sainsburys and ASDA was dangerous. She asked that this crossing was incorporated into the feasibility study.

Borough Councillor Khan had noted that there was a 50 mph sign by the Shell petrol station on the Dome roundabout. This needed to be removed as the speed limits were 40 mph on the A41 and 30 mph on St Albans Road.

#### Appendix D – Update on Watford Junction National Station Improvement Project (NSIP)

The District Manager provided an update on the improvement project. He advised that there had been a delay in the start date.

Borough Councillor Rackett referred to the proposals for Penn Road. He noted that originally the plan had been to allow egress from the station car park; however, the report specified access and egress for the car park. This would have an impact on the local community and would require different traffic light phasing at the junction with St Albans Road. If the light phasing was not amended then it could cause tailbacks into the car park.

Borough Councillor Rackett asked that consideration was given to a pedestrian access. He added that he would strongly object to this vehicular route on safety grounds if the pedestrian access was not incorporated.

#### Appendix E – Watford Borough Council Highways Works

The Head of Planning outlined the highways works carried out by the Borough Council.

Following a question from Councillor Dhindsa about the trial parking controls in Queens Road/The Broadway, the Head of Planning advised that free limited waiting spaces had been introduced. The free waiting time was limited to 10 or 15 minutes. The parking facility was close to the Harlequin and officers wanted

to ensure that visitors to the Harlequin were not encouraged to park there for a long time. The spaces were aimed at drivers visiting the local Broadway shopping Centre.

Councillor Dhindsa asked that if it was successful in Queens Road, he would like it introduced in Vicarage Ward. He said that Whippendell Road was similar to Queens Road.

The Head of Planning explained that each area would be considered individually. She advised that scrutiny would be receiving a report on parking charges later in the year. If there were to be a change in parking arrangements it would need to be considered by Cabinet or Council.

The Chair confirmed that the Queens Road scheme was an experiment. New bays had been created where previously there had been yellow lines. The conditions for the original parking bays had not been changed and the parking meters were already in place. This project needed to be monitored. Depending on the outcome if the scheme was applicable for other areas, it would be necessary to consider the implications if new spaces could not be created. He advised that in Queens Road parking arrangements were being optimised for local shoppers. Officers would be considering whether the free 10 minutes made any difference to the local businesses.

The Vice-Chair commented that the businesses in Queens Road were already reviving. Two new cafes and a new shop had opened. There were also other prospective new occupiers.

The Vice-Chair noted that in the report officers referred to Oxhey Drive opposite Bromet School. This needed to be amended to Oxhey Road.

RESOLVED –

that the reports be noted.

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## **SOUTH WEST HERTS CYCLE STRATEGY**

The Panel received a report of the Programme and Strategy Manager Hertfordshire Highways informing Members of the consultation process that was currently taking place for the South West Herts Cycling Study.

County Councillor Watkin advised that scheme number TR23 was within Watford and not Three Rivers. This needed to be changed. He added that it was difficult to visualise how the routes fitted together.

The Vice-Chair stated that the map was available online.

RESOLVED –

that the contents of the report be noted.



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## **HEALTH CAMPUS, LINK ROAD AND ACCESS ROAD**

The Panel received a report of the Head of Planning informing Members of the progress of the future development.

The Vice-Chair said that it was essential that Members had been provided with this information. The developer would be required to make changes at the Dalton Way junction.

The Head of Planning explained that this was not unusual and was required as part of the development scheme. The Section 106 agreement had been agreed.

Following a question about the funding for the link road, the Head of Planning advised that £6 million was required to deliver the link road. The aim was to complete the road before the Croxley Rail Link started. The plan was to build the bridge before 2014. A separate application would be required for the bridge and link road.

**RESOLVED –**

that the report be noted.

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## **OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS**

The Panel received a report of the District Manager advising the Panel of the performance of Hertfordshire Highways within Watford.

The Vice-Chair commented that the results were disappointing. He said that it was not possible to report overgrown foliage along a stretch of road on the fault reporting system. The system required a person reporting a problem to pinpoint the exact location. He had also noted that some roads had not been included on the reporting system. The previous system was easier to use.

The Chair added that in order to report a broken bollard on Pinner Road he had been required to register and provide personal information.

Generally, Members found the system difficult to use and it was not user-friendly. Borough Councillor Khan said that he had been unable to change his password. Borough Councillor Burtenshaw advised that he had given up trying to register as it was too complicated. This meant that he was unable to track the progress of any requests.

The District Manager responded that many people seemed to be able to use the reporting system. He advised Members that if they were unable to pinpoint the exact location they could use the comment box to provide more details. He reminded Members that the Probation Service carried out much of the work regarding the removal of vegetation. The work was carried out at a far reduced

rate compared to Hertfordshire Highways. In addition Hertfordshire Highways would not carry out work on non-highway land.

The Lead Assistant District Manager added that the Probation Service could not carry out any work where traffic management was required.

Borough Councillor Khan asked why the contractor did not repair other pot holes they saw when repairing a reported one.

The Panel was informed that the contractor would only carry out the work included on the work schedule.

RESOLVED –

that the performance figures be noted.

### 13 **HIGHWAY LOCALITY BUDGET 2012/13 - SCHEME UPDATE**

The Panel received a report of the Lead Assistant District Manager updating Members on the progress of the delivery of the Highway Locality Budget schemes for the current year.

The Vice-Chair noted that the spending update circulated at the meeting did not correspond with Appendix A of the report. He added that there had been problems with all his schemes except for one. He urged Members to check each of their schemes and make sure the work was carried out correctly.

County Councillor Bell commented that he had also had problems in his Division. Letters had been sent to the wrong residential properties.

RESOLVED –

that the progress of the Highway Locality Budget schemes be noted.

### 14 **HIGHWAY SERVICE TRANSFORMATION OCTOBER 2012**

The Panel received a report of the Head of Highways informing Members of the changes to the organisation of the Highways service. The new structure would come into operation on 1 October 2012. The District Manager advised Members that Watford would be part of the South West team. He thanked Members for the support they had given the team.

Borough Councillor Khan commented that it was difficult to find the call centre number of the County Council's website.

The District Manager stated that the telephone number was 0300 123 4047. This number could be used if people were unable to use the fault reporting system.

Following a question about the new local team, the District Manager explained that the local teams would be based at County Hall. Hot desking arrangements would be available at the local depot, which was based in Kings Langley for the South West team. This would enable staff who lived locally to work there rather than travel to Hertford every day.

County Councillor Brandon asked whether arranging site visits with officers would be too much for them.

County Councillor Watkin said that the current officers had good local knowledge. He felt it would become piecemeal with the new structure.

The District Manager assured Members that there were other officers at County Hall who had a strong focus on Watford. The new locality officers would be able to link to the experts in the relevant fields as necessary.

County Councillor Scudder said that he was also worried about the loss of local knowledge. He was also concerned about the loss of control for Members.

The Vice-Chair commented that he was not as concerned as some Members. There would still be local officer support for the County Councillors. There would, however, be more of a loss for the Borough Councillors. One concern he had was the interface between County and Borough officers, as this was not clear.

The Lead Assistant District Manager reminded the County Councillors to begin thinking about the work they wanted carried out in the next financial year.

All Members thanked the officers for their support over the years. The Chair added that the mutual respect between officers and Members was important. The Panel had seen good scrutiny and debate on highways issues. He stated that Members appreciated the work carried out by officers.

RESOLVED –

1. that the Panel's thanks to officers be recorded.
2. that the report be noted.

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## **UPDATE ON LOCALISM - FUTURE OF PANELS / DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Panel received a report of the District Manager which highlighted the decision statement on the future of Highway Joint Member Panels and their successor.

The Chair stated that he wished to record the Watford Panel's objection to the County Council's decision. He informed the Panel that he and County Councillor

Scudder had met the County Portfolio Holder. It had appeared that there would be some flexibility. He suggested that the Borough Council could appoint to a panel which could be merged with the Highway Liaison meetings. The meetings could take place three or four times a year. He added that there was a need for effective scrutiny of highways.

Borough Councillor Sharpe, the Chair, moved the following motion –

"This Panel objects strongly to the plan to eliminate public scrutiny of highways decisions either by local residents or locally elected representatives. Without the Joint Highways Member Panel residents will no longer be able to attend meetings, present petitions or learn how their money is being spent.

The Watford Panel has provided effective scrutiny, holding Herts CC highways services to account and making a positive difference on issues such as Section 106 contributions and the station improvements programme.

Herts County Council is trying to avoid public exposure of service failings by scrapping these public panels."

The Panel discussed the motion. The Vice-Chair suggested an amendment to ensure that all Panel Members felt they could support the motion. He proposed that "...exposure of service failings..." be replaced by the word "scrutiny". The Panel agreed this amendment.

The Panel continued to discuss the proposed arrangements. Members felt there was a democratic deficit.

The Vice-Chair informed the Panel that the liaison meetings would have a fixed agenda; there would be no papers circulated in advance; the County Cabinet Member would decide who chaired the meeting. He questioned the legality of the arrangements. He added that there would be no public debate on petitions. Petitions would only be discussed with the relevant County Councillor. He did not envisage this would work in urban areas. The current Panels were fixed in the calendar and open to the public.

The Head of Planning said that she had sympathy with Members views. The highways agreement had lapsed and the Borough Council was unable to force the County Council to send officers to a meeting. If Members decided they wanted to establish a new Panel a decision would need to be taken at Council.

It was agreed that a letter would be sent to the County Council Portfolio Holder, Councillor Stuart Pile, to convey the Panel's views.

**ACTION:** Chair of Hertfordshire Highways Watford Joint Member Panel and Committee and Scrutiny Officer

RESOLVED –

This Panel objects strongly to the plan to eliminate public scrutiny of highways decisions either by local residents or locally elected representatives. Without the Joint Highways Member Panel residents will no longer be able to attend meetings, present petitions or learn how their money is being spent.

The Watford Panel has provided effective scrutiny, holding Herts CC highways services to account and making a positive difference on issues such as Section 106 contributions and the station improvements programme.

Herts County Council is trying to avoid public scrutiny by scrapping these public panels.

Chair  
Hertfordshire Highways  
Watford Joint Member Panel

The Meeting started at 6.00 pm  
and finished at 8.45 pm