MINUTES OF CUSTOMER AND PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2010

PRESENT:

Members of the Committee: Mrs Watson (Vice-Chairman), Miss Lawrence, Lewis, Mahoney, Mrs Peach, Sewell, Mrs Walton and Miss Watts

Also in Attendance: Councillors Mrs Bragg, Hazelton, Sandison, Srivastava and Whistance

Adrian Hart, Team Leader – Transport Planning, WCC

Officers: David Burrows, Regulatory Services Manager
Debbie Dawson, Scrutiny Officer
Elizabeth Routledge, Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2010 were approved and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

29. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ms Edwards and Leigh Hunt.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs Walton declared a general personal interest by virtue of being a Warwickshire County Councillor.

31. LOCAL TRANSPORT ISSUES AND AIR QUALITY

The Committee had called a special meeting to look at transport issues as a result of discussions arising from an update on the Joint Transport Review in June 2010.

Adrian Hart, Team Leader – Transport Planning, WCC was welcomed to the meeting and presented a report addressing a number of particular issues highlighted by members in advance of the meeting.

Traffic Modelling: The County Council, in conjunction with the promoters of the Rugby Radio Station site, had developed an S-PARAMICS micro-simulation traffic model of Rugby, based on actual data. The preparation of an individual transport model includes data collection, model development and model validation.

- Data Collection. Members asked how data was collected. Mr Hart responded that models were typically based on a mixture of data including...
traffic counts, origin and destination information (based on road-side interviews), journey runs, census information and other data sources (eg car park usage, school travel surveys, etc). National databases regarding traffic growth also helped with traffic prediction. In all cases, it was essential that good quality data was collected and fed into the software.

- **Model Development.** Following the preparation of a base year model (which is designed to replicate the current situation), a future year model is produced for a given year that takes into account predicted background traffic growth and committed development proposals.

- **Model Validation.** These models would be audited by a third party before they were used for testing to ensure they were robust.

WCC was considered a leading authority on S-PARAMICS and Mr Hart offered to come back to a future meeting of the Committee to give a demonstration of what the model could do.

Members asked how increased traffic flows would affect air quality. The Regulatory Services Manager responded that the council had responsibility for air quality management. Real-time data was used and the council’s own model was used to determine the air quality impact. Borough and County Council officers worked closely together on large projects in what could be termed a symbiotic relationship, with each authority relying on the other for data.

The use of S-PARAMICS by the County Council to evaluate air quality implications arising from transport schemes and development proposals was currently limited. This was primarily due to the fact that models within the county based on S-PARAMICS software had only recently been developed.

Members asked how much of the Traffic Modelling process was governed by legislation. Mr Hart responded that the process was governed by the guidance in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges which set out the approach to traffic modelling required by the Department for Transport in the preparation of a Major Scheme Business Case.

Mr Hart was asked whether the traffic model could be used in emergency planning. He responded that if a major incident occurred on a motorway, for example, the model could be used (in theory) – he wasn’t aware of the Rugby S-PARAMICS having been used for such a purpose to date.

**Public Consultation:** Members asked how the public were notified of potential major schemes. Officers responded that major schemes were subject to consultation with the public using a variety of media. Air Quality Assessments were not carried out on every single transport issue, but are principally undertaken on larger scale schemes.

Mr Hart was asked what happened about problems raised by members of the public which were thought to be the result of a particular traffic system. He responded that hundreds of requests for resources were received each year, such as new pedestrian crossings, etc. All requests received a response. However, evidence gathering had to take place before any action could be taken as it wasn’t possible to use anecdotal evidence. There was an email address on the WCC website which members of the public could use to contact the County Council.
Rugby Western Relief Road: The original Major Scheme Business Case for the Rugby Western Relief Road included an assessment of the predicted impacts on air quality.

The results of the assessment had shown reductions in traffic flows in the town centre at locations where air quality had been predicted to exceed the Nitrogen Dioxide objective. The assessment had concluded that the predicted reductions in flows of up to 12% would lead to a reduction in emissions of pollutants and hence an improvement in air quality in these areas. It was felt therefore that the Relief Road represented a valuable air quality improvement measure for the town centre. In addition, the Western Relief Road would allow the implementation of other traffic management measures that would bring an improvement to air quality in the town centre at locations such as the Warwick Street gyratory and on Church Street/North Street in terms of expanding the existing pedestrianised area of the town centre.

Town Centre Pedestrianisation: AECOM (the Borough Council’s retained air quality consultants) had undertaken a study of the air quality implications of the proposed Town Centre Pedestrianisation proposals in 2009. At that time, AECOM concluded that the proposed scheme was not considered likely to cause any new exceedences of the air quality objectives for either NO$_2$ or PM$_{10}$ at locations of relevant exposure within the town centre. AECOM had subsequently carried out a Detailed Assessment of air quality earlier this year which had studied NO$_2$ concentrations at two areas in Rugby, one of which was the town centre. Short-term monitoring results undertaken as part of the study had highlighted potential exceedences of the objective at sites along narrow roads in the town centre because of poor dispersion.

A sum of money had been allocated to prepare a detailed design for the Town Centre Pedestrianisation proposals during the current financial year (2010/11). However, the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review was due to report on 20th October and this was likely to signify a reduction in the capital expenditure available to the County Council to spend on transport schemes in the next three years. There was, therefore, no likelihood of the pedestrianisation proposals coming forward in the near future unless additional funds could be found, the main source of which could be S106 monies from the redevelopment of the Evreux Way or North Street areas of the town centre.

Members asked when the results of the Rugby Western Relief Road survey would be known. Officers responded that there should be 6 months’ worth of data available early next year, when the Committee would be reviewing the air quality monitoring arrangements. Diffusion tubes were being used at approximately 40 sites which would assist in validating the model predictions regarding changes in air quality resulting from the opening of the road.

Avon Mill Roundabout The main problem affecting the roundabout was that vehicles entering from the A426 Leicester Road and B4112 Newbold Road, heading towards the town centre, experienced significant queues and delays, particularly during the morning peak period. The preliminary design included measures to improve capacity on the A426 Newbold Road by widening it to 2-way dual carriageway standard over the River Avon between Avon Mill and a new roundabout at the junction of Hunters lane. It had been envisaged that a significant
element of the scheme costs would be met through contributions as a result of future development taking place.

The proposed improvement to the Avon Mill roundabout had been identified in the emerging LTP3 as the highest priority County Road scheme within the Rugby area.

**Bridge Works:** Other than some minor repairs to one of the structures at Avon Mill, there were no other major bridge works planned in the Rugby area in the near future. The County Council was currently liaising with Rugby Borough Council regarding some potential bridge strengthening works to the highway structures on Clifton Road and Hillmorton Road where they crossed the Great Central Walkway. Both of these bridges were owned and maintained by the Borough Council. Members expressed concern that any works taking place on the Hillmorton Road Bridge would cause major traffic problems.

**Cumulative Effect of Major Projects:** The traffic modelling which the County Council had undertaken to advise the Borough Council on the transport implications of the LDF Core Strategy made a number of assumptions regarding the future year assessments in 2026, as detailed in Mr Hart's report. The list demonstrated that the cumulative effects of known projects and schemes were taken into account in the modelling process.

The following additional points were made:

- Members commented that although the discussion had focussed on the future of traffic and air quality, nothing had been mentioned about the present. Members for Hillmorton asked why nothing appeared to have been done regarding their requests for work to be carried out on the A428, where several serious accidents had occurred. Mr Hart assured members that the issue had not been forgotten; unfortunately, there was very little funding available and it would be necessary to seek opportunities of funding from new developments (primarily in this area from the redevelopment of the Radio Station site) to help mitigate existing issues. In the meantime, Mr Hart would be happy to meet with Hillmorton Ward Councillors to discuss the situation further once the proposed modelling work had been completed.
- Mr Hart was questioned about a survey to be carried out regarding traffic flows at the crossroads in Dunchurch following the opening of the Rugby Western Relief Road – it was understood that the survey would only include Cemex traffic. As he was unable to answer the member’s specific question at the time, he undertook to investigate further and respond to the member directly.
- Members asked if automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) surveys were used when collecting traffic data for the town. Mr Hart responded that these surveys could complement origin/destination surveys. However, they had not been used in Rugby as the technical capability wasn’t yet in place to do so.
- It was understood that there were due to be restrictions on heavy traffic on Boughton Road and members asked when this might be implemented. Mr Hart commented that it was a requirement of the planning consent for the former Alstom/GEC site that before any further development occurred, a traffic management scheme had to be implemented on Boughton Road.
- Officers were asked what action could be taken against ‘polluters’ such as buses emitting black smoke from their exhausts. To stop and/or fine such vehicles would require the adoption of specific legislation which Warwickshire had never
adopted. Officers also commented that, as the Borough Council’s Core Strategy was proposing major development in the town in the next 15 years, traffic would continue to grow. As a consequence of development, traffic congestion, pollution and air quality issues were likely to increase – work was being undertaken to mitigate the effects of this on the transport network of the town.

- The Regulatory Services Manager was asked how NO₂ was measured. He responded that there was one automatic monitoring station on Newbold Road which took readings every 15 seconds. In addition, there were approximately 40 diffusion tubes – their readings were averaged out over a set period of time. There had been a temporary expansion of the diffusion tube network and it was confirmed (in response to members’ queries) that Lawrence Sherriff Street, Whitehall Road and Murray Road were being monitored. Diffusion tubes were also planned for Clifton Road.

- Members enquired as to how plans for a possible new road connecting the Radio Station site off the A428 Crick Road with Dunchurch were progressing. Mr Hart responded that it had been recognised that there was a need for improvements to the south of the town and that a number of options were being considered by the County Council. These would be considered by the inspector at the forthcoming Local Development Framework Core Strategy Independent Examination in December 2010.

- Members asked if it was possible to assess the effect of driver behaviour on air quality, for example, at the traffic lights at ASDA. Officers responded that it wasn’t possible to erect signs asking drivers to turn off their engines and confirmed that ‘stop starts’ were not taken into account at local level.

The Committee thanked Mr Hart and the Regulatory Services Manager for a good, open and honest debate which had greatly improved members’ understanding of a number of transport and air quality issues within the town.

CHAIRMAN