MEETING	TRAFFIC CONGESTION AD-HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	4 SEPTEMBER 2007
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS MERRETT (CHAIR), HUDSON (VICE-CHAIR), MOORE, MORLEY, PIERCE, SIMPSON-LAING AND SMITH (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBER) AND MR M SMITH (CO-OPTED NON-STATUTORY MEMBER)
IN ATTENDANCE	MATTHEW PAGE – INSTITUTE FOR TRANSPORT STUDIES, LEEDS
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLOR HOGG

10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Merrett declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 4 (Interim Report for Traffic Congestion Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Committee) as an honorary member of the Cyclists' Touring Club and a member of Cycling England.

11. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 17 July 2007 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

i) The addition of the following bullet point under points raised by Members:

- Impact of tour buses on congestion

ii) The deletion of the word "bus" and its replacement with "road" in the example in the final sentence of the first paragraph on page 7.

12. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been one registration to speak at the meeting from Councillor A D'Agorne.

Councillor D'Agorne referred to the information in Annex D particularly in relation to freight transhipment centres which he confirmed was fair but he

stated that he felt the report did not go far enough in acknowledging other points.
He stated that the Local Transport Plans (LTP) included details of the Air Quality Management Area in the city centre, within which the annual average nitrogen dioxide levels had been exceeded at 5 locations and for which the target of reduction was by 2005. He also quoted from Annex I of the LTP on the Freight Strategy and to the proposal to establish Low Emission Zones, which aimed to cut polluting vehicles from certain area of the city. This had envisaged a 5-year action plan but he felt that this proposal did not go far enough. Reference was also made to Annex U of the LTP report, the Air Quality Action Plan, and the table relating to HGV emissions and their reduction with the use of transhipment centres. He also referred to the figures quoted in relation to HGV's having a disproportionate impact on air quality. In particular to the figures quoted of 11-18% from emissions on major roads from HGV's, which could be eliminated by transhipment sites thereby having a significant impact on air quality in the central area. He stated that a freight strategy did not appear to have a high priority in the report and he referred to the Freight Partnership formed in 2006, which could be engaged to assist with any works in this area.
He also raised points on the British Retail Consortium and delivery curfews, possible charging for out of town shopping centres and the need to consider economic factors in the longer term.
He stated that the scale of development now proposed in the area required a more radical approach.

New members questioned where they could view the findings referred to in the Local Transport Plan Reports. Officers confirmed that these were available on the Council's website.

13. INTERIM REPORT FOR TRAFFIC CONGESTION AD-HOC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members considered a report, which updated them on the work completed to date on the Traffic Congestion Scrutiny Review. This included information gathered on the following areas recommended for improvement:

i. Accessibility to services, employment, education and health
ii. Air Quality, in particular looking at the five hotspots identified in the LTP2
iii. Alternative environmentally viable and financially practical methods of transport
iv. CO^2 Emissions
v. Journey times and reliability of public transport
vi. Economic Performance
vii. Quality of Life
viii. Road Safety

At the last meeting consideration had been given to the City of York Council's view on journey times and reliability of public transport (Annex E) and further consideration of the remaining appendices A to D below had been deferred to this meeting.

Annex A Programme for carrying out mapping works
Annex B Evidence of the soft measures presently in place to encourage a reduction in car travel in York
Annex C Statistics showing vehicle fleet in use in York
Annex D Paper on alternative environmentally viable and financially practical methods of transport

Members and Officers made the following comments in relation to the various annexes

Annex A – Programme for carrying out mapping works

Reference was made to staffing issues and training on 'Accession' and drawbacks to 'Accession' as it focussed mainly on public transport.

It was considered that "Improved interchange points in the city centre" would improve access and there were questions why the Scutiny Committee on 4 April 2007 had not considered this point as essential.

Mr Page queried how good the programme was for modelling, walking and cycling as opposed to its recognisedbenefits for bus access modelling.

The Officer's view was that there was a staffing resource problem in this area.

Annex B – Smarter Choices Actions

Officers confirmed that Smarter Choices were considered a powerful tool and that they would like to do far more work in this area. It was confirmed that there was no longer a budget for this work so they were no longer in a position to promote large campaigns but were doing some one off work with the Government Road Safety Grant.

Members confirmed that smart choice work appeared to be more effective than physical measures on their own. There was a strong Officer view that Smarter Choice Actions were an important means of changing travel behaviour and achieveing modal shift.

Annex C – Statistics showing vehicle fleet in use in York

Members questioned the information contained in this report and Officers confirmed that they would:

- check the area covered by the figures provided,
- obtain national comparison figures
- provide details for the missing years
- provide Euro level information
- confirm if company cars were excluded

Annex D – Alternative environmentally viable and financially practical methods of transport

Members commented that this briefing note contained some controversial and arguable points. In response, Officers said these had been included to elicit discussion on traffic congestion and the alternative methods of transport. They stated that it should be made clear that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) information superseded some of the facts set out on page 29 of the report.

Members questioned the PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ limits and the implications for the City. Officers confirmed that the government objectives were 35 exceedences allowed per year for PM_{10} but that this was likely to be reduced in the future. At present York had 10 to 15 exceedences of PM_{10} but that $PM_{2.5}$ was measured at a national level and not by Local Authorities at present. Officers confirmed that, if required, they could undertake a short term project at minimal cost to measure levels of $PM_{2.5}$ in the city.

The Committee agreed that levels of PM_{10} were acceptable, unless there were major changes in York. It was noted that they may not meet the Government and deadline targets at some city locations.

Mr Page advised that there were a range of figures for the relative emissions of different forms of transport, giving a different view from that stated on page 30 of the report. Figures would also depend upon driving characteristics.

Transhipment Centres

Members commented that major retailers who owned more than one store in the City would be able to take advantage of transhipment centres and help contribute to reducing traffic congestion. They discussed the effect of the growth of home deliveries and Internet shopping on the road network.

Officers stated that the report could be more balanced but that was not to say that the Authority were not committed to investigating transhipment centres. Although these centres would be relatively easy to provide there were other issues to resolve other than air quality damage. They confirmed that as part of the LPT2 there was to be a major scheme bid to examine all traffic problems in the city however the real issues related to the impact of those solutions, which would require a government shift.

Members questioned the reference to “significant amount of evidence that transhipment centres were not self financing” and also queried the environmental impact of transhipment centres. Officers confirmed that if these were sited in the correct place air quality would not be an issue.

Members stated that the management of deliveries would be a better option to alleviate large delivery vehicles causing congestion in the city centre and discharging fumes whilst queuing. Officers confirmed that Police had no authority over parking issues and that this was now the responsibility of the local authority as highway authority.

Public Transport

Mr Page reminded members that the information set out in the report covered a wide field and that there was significantly different information available in relation to some of the figures provided. He confirmed that there was an enormous variation in emissions with different types of vehicles and that he disagreed with the statement that " Buses in their present guise are thus clearly not any form of environmentally friendly transport. " as this depended on the numbers using the bus and how many car journeys had been displaced.

Members questioned the University of Tokyo data and if the figures referred to were European wide as this could have an impact as York had a higher standard for bus fleet emissions.

Members realised that although buses were not the cleanest means of transport the operators should seek to try and keep fleets up to date with low emission vehicles and the use of optimum fuels.

Freight

Members referred to the multi drop approach and its three key impacts as set out in the briefing report. Members felt that there was also a fourth impact namely that of empty vehicles returning to base following completion of their delivery.

Green Transport Fuels

Mr Page referred to tests on bio-diesel and stated that there was a significant amount of concern regarding this fuel, particularly the impact on food production from any large scale shift in agriculture to biofuel. The increase in emissions was unknown and decisions were required on whether to save the planet or the local environment. He stated that there were transport solutions available now against those that could be available in the future.

Officers advised that the current 50% bio diesel compound was limited by currently available engine technology, not the potential of bio fuel. Arriva were currently testing a 20% mix.

Non powered solutions

The Chair circulated an article from Cycle Digest 2007 related to a study on Commuter Cycling and details of the mode share of cycling in other European countries. He stated that, on the EU evidence, with the right policies and facilities there was significant potential for increasing cycling levels in York. To put the percentages in context Officers confirmed that the UK had a 1.5% share, York 13-15% and Cambridge 20% compared with The Netherlands at 27%.

Members made the following points in relation to non powered solutions and cycling:

- Reference made to the use of cycling couriers in the city
- Cycling as a cultural choice (people not wanting to turn up for work wet)
- An examination was required on what the limitations in increasing cycling were.
- Was there a capacity in the network for the number of cyclists to increase?
- Important to make cycling more attractive.
- Because of severe traffic and parking problems in Cambridge there was a Regulation of the University, agreed with the City Council, that students were not allowed to keep a car or motorcycle in the city.

Vehicle Group (a)

The Assistant Director of City Development and Transport stated that the vehicles included in this group, which included Conventional Light Railway or guided solutions, were he felt not appropriate for York which was a tight compact city. It was stated that this would not be a practical solution without a large subsidy. Officers referred to cultural and health and safety issues relating to sharing space which was a possible additional barrier and expressed the view that York would need to work on bus based PT solutions, but looking to get the right bus types.

Mr Page confirmed that the options varied in this group but that it would not be without large costs and the Chair suggested that this would not be a practical option.

Members made the following points

- The way forward was the need to link demand management with environmental improvements.
- Schools were a major contributor to congestion as they drew their pupils from a wide area. It was felt that there was a need to examine the surrounding issues.
- Questioned the use of Park and Ride vehicles on bus routes 22 and 23 which at times were not fully utilised (other than during rush hour) when smaller powered vehicles could be used.

The Committee agreed that unfortunately they were only able to find local non powered solutions which narrowed the focus of the scrutiny. This included undertaking a more detailed examination of bus transport, investment in non powered solutions, demand management and the possibilities of obtaining Government funding for improvements to the outer ring road. Members also referred to recruitment issues in the department and questioned whether there were sufficient staffing resources to carry out further investigative work. Officers stated that previously Consultants had been used for some of this work, at significant additional cost and there was a need to 'educate' more Council staff in how to cover core workloads and be innovative in recruitment and retention. In addition Members identified issues around tackling the school run and bus vehicle sizes.

RESOLVED:

(i) That further consideration of Annex C be deferred until a future meeting.

(ii) That the provision of a transhipment centre for York was not high priority at the present time but may be worth consideration in the future.

(iii) That further consideration be given to cycling issues at a future meeting.

(iv) In regard to trains and lorries, City of York Council should seek to influence freight and rail companies to use green transport fuels.

(v) In regard to buses, City of York Council should work with the Quality Bus Partnership to influence the use of green transport fuels, low emission vehicles and up to date fleets by the various bus operators in York. The Council should seek to do this via contract agreements.

REASON: To ensure full consideration of all the objectives.

CLLR D MERRETT, Chair
[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 7.30 pm].