

On 26<sup>th</sup> June, the longstanding MATS (March Area Transport Strategy) proposals to improve the road system around and within March were not approved to move forward by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Transport & Infrastructure Committee (TIC). This came as a considerable shock to all concerned. Whilst, I understand, the majority of the members of the Committee continued to support the MATS strategy, the proposal failed because, under the CPCA Constitution, all transport proposals must be supported by the representatives of both Highways Authorities in the Combined Authority Area. However the MATS proposals were not supported by the Cambridgeshire County Council member on the committee, effectively exercising the County Council's veto as Highways Authority. In the current politically febrile atmosphere a couple of days before the General Election, I don't feel that it would be productive to speculate as to why the CCC member of the Committee failed to support the MATS proposals.

The MATS proposals have had, and continue to have, full support from both the political leaderships and the professional officer leaderships of FDC, CCC and the CPCA. Very shortly after the TIC meeting, discussions began between the Officers of the three organisations to rectify the effects of that veto, and I understand that the matter will be brought back to the next meeting of TIC where I am confident that the MATS proposals will receive unanimous support. That next TIC meeting is scheduled to take place before the next meeting of the CPCA Board, so no time will have been lost in moving the MATS proposals forward towards eventual realisation, and there is perceived to be no threat to the funding for the schemes. It is not always the case that an adverse vote in a meeting will have no serious consequences, of course. As Martin will be painfully and personally aware, the vote to permit waste processing at Saxon Pit was disastrous for Whittlesey, and we'll live with the consequences of that vote for decades to come. The vote at the TIC last month was of a wholly different nature in that that vote can be, and will be, corrected before the matter could come before this month's CPCA Board meeting.

I hope that provides reassurance to those who may have been concerned by the content of Martin's open letter.

To answer Martin's specific points and questions:

1. There will be no delay to the MATS proposals as a result of last month's exercise of the veto by the CCC member of the TIC. I am told that that veto will not be exercised again on this subject on behalf of CCC and that no objection will be raised at the subsequent CPCA Board meeting.
2. The additional abstention last month at the TIC, by Councillor Nawaz, was not done with my authority, foreknowledge or wishes. Whilst the motivation for that abstention (the interests of promoting Whittlesey's transport needs) was undoubtedly genuine, it was nevertheless misplaced in the context of that Agenda Item. I subsequently discussed this matter with Councillor Nawaz who now appreciates the need to continue to give full backing to the MATS proposals.
3. Fenland has been and continues to be very willing to work positively with the CPCA in order to obtain authorisation for the many necessary projects within Fenland for which we have either achieved funding or for which we are actively lobbying. That

does not, however, absolve us from our duty to see that the highest standards of behaviour are followed by all elected members who serve on the CPCA. To be fair to the CPCA, and contrary to Martin's implication in his open letter, FDC's Officers have experienced no unwillingness at all on the part of CPCA Officers to continue to work constructively and collaboratively with FDC to maximise the positive effect that the Combined Authority can bring to Fenland, particularly (but not exclusively) in the areas of infrastructure, economic growth and skills.

With kind regards,

Chris