



**Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**Monday 26 February 2024 at 1.00 pm**

**Minutes**

**Present In Person**

Councillor John McNicholas (Chair)	Coventry City Council
Councillor Mary Locke (Vice-Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Timothy Huxtable	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Carol Hyatt	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner OBE	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Martin McCarthy	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Saddak Miah	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Josh O'Nyons	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor David Stanley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Robert Tromans	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council

**Present Virtually**

Councillor Emma Marshall	Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Barbara McGarrity	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Alan Taylor	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Antony Tucker	Coventry City Council

**In Attendance**

Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Helen Edwards	Director of Law & Governance
Lyndsey Roberts	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Kate Taylor	Finance
Adam Harrison	Principal Policy & Strategy Officer
Mike Waters	Director of Policy, Strategy & Innovation
Pete Bond	Head of Operational Assets
Thomas Skidmore	Head of Integration - Transport Lead

**Item Title**

**No.**

**65. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Aqeela Choudhry, Councillor Zaker Choudhry, Councillor Amo Hussain, Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal and Councillor Ian Nellins.

**66. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**67. Chair's Remarks**

The chair raised the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) that was presented at the WMCA Board in January. He invited the Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning to update the committee on the presented the budget. She reported the cumulative loss of £17.5 million. She continued and stated that this had necessitated a revaluation of the MTFP, which would likely be rebased. However, there was also a loss of income that would need to be addressed with leaders. The committee needs to thoroughly understand the implications of these financial challenges. Councillor Pervez Akhtar emphasised the importance of understanding the implications of financial challenges amid the current cost-of-living crisis. He stressed the importance of how the needs of the community could still be met despite financial constraints was a priority. The chair confirmed it was crucial for the committee to understand the implications of the loss and how it would affect the organisation's financial strategy and operations and requested a briefing ahead of the next meeting.

The Chair then drew attention to the recent announcement on HS2 to which the Director of Policy Strategy and Innovation confirmed that the announcement regarding HS2 would not impact the Network North projects.

**68. Minutes - 22 January 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2024 were agreed to be updated to reflect the discussion held around the Ring and Ride Target Operating Model, they will read:

“The committee considered a report of the Head of Network Transformation on the Ring & Ride target operating model. The report set out the drivers of change, along with the emerging future target operating model for the region's Ring & Ride service, seeking endorsement of the proposed approach.

In response to question from the committee, the Head of Network Transformation confirmed that although depots would be centralised, cross-border travel would not be negatively affected.

Councillor Ian Ward emphasised that the review should consider providing fair access and addressing transport barriers. Councillor Carol Hyatt raised a point regarding the capacity constraints of the service, with the limiting factors being the number of buses and drivers rather than the potential number of passengers. Councillor Pervez Akhtar inquired about funding possibilities from Network North, and a discussion was held around the

allocation of funding for the review and the need for additional data.

The committee suggested that the criteria be reviewed and possibilities for subsidising service use for community diagnostics, with the possibility of revisiting these matters at a future meeting.”

The Director of Integrated Transport Services reassured the committee that the notes had been captured and they will be reflected in the report going to Mayor and Portfolio Leads.

#### **69. Deeper Devolution (Transport) - Implementation Plan**

The Principal Policy and Strategy Office delivered an update on the Deeper Devolution Deal, particularly focusing on the Transport Implementation Plan. He provided insights into the progress made since the last update and outlined key commitments for the future.

The chair raised concerns regarding potential delays in the in the draft bill as a result of potential change to future. Councillor Carol Hyatt raised concerns regarding the delays in implementing the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) and the Principal Policy and Strategy Office were advocating for a devolved approach to achieve outcomes for the region.

In response to Councillor David Stanley it was confirmed that the West Bromwich to Brierley Hill Exchange and Adren Cross had received additional funding but would need to go through the business case process, with presentations scheduled for the WMCA Board in July.

In response to questions around the Digitising Street Space project. Mike Waters provided details on how street space could be managed more effectively through technical solutions and clarified that the project primarily involved back-office systems to improve processes. The Director of TfWM reiterated the project's objectives and its limited impact on roadside operations.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress on delivering against the Deeper Devolution Deal transport implementation plan was reviewed.
- (2) The risks emerging on a number of deal elements and the proposed mitigations being taken to manage them were scrutinised and endorsed.

#### **70. Public Transport Real Time Information (RTI) System Improvements**

The Director of Policy Strategy and Innovation presented a report on the progress made by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) in enhancing the customer experience through improved Real-Time Information (RTI) provision. He sought input to a draft communications plan which is intended to inform travellers of the improvements being made and what they can expect to see over the coming months and years.

Councillor Carol Hyatt praised the officers for their transparency and constructive dialogue during the last Member Engagement Group and

emphasized the critical need for funding to support transportation improvements. Councillor Timothy Huxtable stated that the discussion on RTI would be also brought to the Rail Member Engagement Group in order to be inclusive of the transport network. Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner highlighted the challenge of RTI access at bus stops without shelter in areas where there isn't a high use of technology, advocating for inclusive policies. This was seconded by Councillor Robert Tromans who emphasised the importance of user-friendly QR codes for RTI. Council Martin McCarthy queried as to whether improving the integrity of the data would improve aid of profitability of services and increase our opportunity of maintaining services to which the Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands confirmed, yes.

The committee were assured of the cost effectiveness of QR codes and Councillor Tim Huxtable suggested promoting services in order to boost patronage and reduce subsidisation. The committee also received confirmation that all RTI improvements were independent of bus franchising.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress to date set out in the report in securing funding and implementing an improvement action plan to increase the performance of the region's RTI system, including the on-going performance monitoring regime were commented on and scrutinised.
- (2) The issues within the RTI system which are hampering the targeted level of customer experience, but which are inherent in a complex system of systems operated by multiple stakeholder organisations were noted.
- (3) Comments were provided on the proposed communications plan to inform customers of the issues and the improvements that they can expect to see over the coming months and years which will be used to inform the development of the final plan.

## **71. Park & Ride Update**

The Head of Integration presented an overview of the park and ride estate of WMCA. They began with background information on the estate, they then elaborated on the planned and ongoing strategy and development to the committee.

Councillor Timothy Huxtable highlighted the importance of integrating the bus network with park and ride facilities for a cohesive transport system, which was acknowledged by the Head of Integration who mentioned ongoing efforts towards this goal. Legal challenges were noted regarding electric vehicle charging rollout, while park and ride charges in Solihull were compared to those in Chiltern, the committee heard of the conditions of Chiltern's leasing arrangement and its cessation. The Director of Integrated Transport Services confirmed a CCTV camera refresh and plans for environmentally friendly lighting updates. Discussions were held around mobility hubs' integration and parking shortages. While Councillor Robert

Alden suggested cost-saving measures for EV chargers, he also highlighted the need to build more park and ride station around the cross-city line and suggested that the parking charges at Longbridge Station be removed. The Head of Integration agreed to consider adding park and ride facilities to other stations, supported by Metro and buses, with additional park and ride options under consideration.

Resolved:

- (1) The approach to the continued strategic and operational development of Park & Ride following the Covid-19 pandemic was considered and endorsed.

## **72. West Midlands Cycle Hire Scheme Update**

The Head of Operational Assets provided an update on the West Midlands Cycle Hire (WMCH) scheme, launched in 2021. They shared the main focuses, and reported on assessing its achievement of targets, performance, management, and integration with other schemes like e-scooters and local travel points as the end of the existing contract.

They shared challenges and operational improvements which were discussed, with a focus on the recovery plan. Details of scheme realignment and next steps were shared, including ongoing efforts to secure a sponsor.

The Director of Integrated Transport Services reaffirmed that funding considerations had been made at a broader level.

Councillor Martin McCarthy raised concerns regarding losses and the online sale of batteries. The Implementation Manager for the Cycle Hire scheme highlighted efforts to redesign the payment and tracker system for future contracts, including secondary tracker implementation and tracker movement. He emphasised the redesign of bike offers to ensure the best value-for-money contract is in place, assuring the committee that work was actively underway.

Resolved:

- (1) The additional funding requirement of £2.1m to take the scheme through to the end of the existing contract in October 2025, requiring WMCA Board approval, was endorsed.
- (2) The conclusion of options appraisal of the existing scheme and interim measures taken to improve performance of the scheme and mitigate the challenges reported in Autumn 2023 was endorsed.
- (3) The original objectives of the scheme and the level to which these are being met through the existing scheme, as per WMCA Board report 24 July 2020 were noted.
- (4) The link between the existing WMCH scheme and the developing Local Travel Points that would include further cycle hire scheme along with improved safety and security measures was noted.

**73. Member Engagement Groups – Progress Report**

The lead members of the Membership Engagement Groups provided updates on their last meetings. Councillor Robert Tromans raised a discussion on the Elephant and Bear Line to which Councillor Timonhy Huxtable committed to raised it for discission and the next Rail Member Engagement Group. The committee endorsed recommendations to incorporate discussed matters into the committee's work programme and future member briefings.

Resolved:

- (1) The report was noted and the committee and considered whether it wished for any of the matters discussed at the recent Member Engagement Groups to be incorporated into the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee's work programme.
- (2) The committee agreed that a breifing would be received on ZEBRA and bus franchising.

**74. Work Programme**

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer confirmed additions to the committee's work programme, and assured the committee that all matters raised during the year would be addressed by the end of the year.

**75. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 18 March 2024 at 1:00pm

The meeting ended at 3:00pm