



Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 30 October 2023 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

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 Emma Marshall	Worcestershire Non-Constituent Local Authorities
Councillor Martin McCarthy	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Barbara McGarrity	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Steve Melia	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor David Stanley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council

In Attendance

Councillor Mike Bird	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Anne Shaw	Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands

Item No. Title

24. Inquorate Meeting

This meeting was inquorate and therefore decisions taken at the meeting would be submitted to the WMCA Board on 17 November.

25. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed the Portfolio Lead Member and members of the committee to the first question time for 2023/24 that would be focussing on transport policy and delivery related matters.

26. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Aqueela Choudhry (Sandwell), Councillor Amo Hussain (Walsall), Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner (Birmingham), Councillor Saddak Miah (Birmingham), Councillor Josh O'Nyons (Solihull) and Councillor Alan Taylor (Dudley).

27. Opening Statement from the Portfolio Lead for Transport

The Portfolio Lead gave an introductory statement focusing on his vision for transport in the West Midlands, priorities for the year, transport funding and the CRSTS programme. The Hydrogen Bus Programme was also referred to and the need for cars to be considered when improving environmental impacts was highlighted.

28. Questions to the Portfolio Lead from Members of the Committee

The committee pursued a number of general lines of enquiry with the Portfolio Lead for Transport, including the local transport plan, bus operations the regional road safety strategy and customer communications.

The committee discussed the need for a phased approach to the implementation of the local transport plan, with a focus on good opportunities for public transport and input from Transport for West Midlands into all planning applications. The committee also discussed the shift in policy around the local transport plan, with the emphasis now on infrastructure for public transport. Councillor Mike Bird hoped for a change in government policy to reflect the different needs of the West Midlands region compared to London.

In response to a question from Councillor Ian Ward, it was confirmed that TfWM had 100 hydrogen buses on order, with 24 already ordered and the rest of the buses would be ordered when the business cases were approved. The committee agreed that hydrogen buses and electric vehicles were a promising technology, but there were still some unknowns that need to be addressed. TfWM was working with the industry to explore the possibilities.

With regards to bus services, the committee were open to exploring alternative ways for the provision of services in the West Midlands and were particularly interested in finding ways to reduce the reliance on National Express West Midlands.

The committee acknowledged the importance of reliability and real-time information in encouraging people to use public transport. Councillor Mike Bird explained that the WMCA was working to improve reliability through live communications and consultation with bus operators, as well as by improving the road network with bus lanes and other measures.

Demand responsive transport was discussed and whether the WMCA would consider using this method to improve reliability. The Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands confirmed that the local authorities, the WMCA and police were developing an action plan for the regional road safety strategy which would include monitoring and evaluation.

In response to a question from Councillor Emma Marshall, the Executive Director for Transport for West Midlands noted that the WMCA had been working on improving its website and feedback procedure. The WMCA was also looking to conduct a consultation that included the public to develop transportation priorities.

Resolved:

The following observations be shared with the WMCA Board and Portfolio Lead Member for Transport for consideration and response as appropriate:

(1) Bus Reliability

WMCA officers should consider applying pressure on operators to improve the technology on buses to encourage accurate and reliable real-time information.

(2) Demand Responsive Transport

The committee explored whether the WMCA would consider using a demand responsive transport system to improve reliability and agreed that a report be considered at a future meeting.

(3) Regional Road Safety Strategy - Action Plan

The committee expressed a wish to be kept apprised on the development of the Regional Road Safety Strategy action plan and agreed that a report be presented at a future meeting.

(4) Communications and Engagement

The committee considered that communication and engagement was an area that needed further review by the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

29. Closing Comments from the Portfolio Lead for Transport and Chair

Councillor Mike Bird thanked the committee for their hard work and dedication. He commended Councillor Ian Ward for his work as the previous Portfolio Lead for Transport.

30. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 30 October 2023 at 1.00pm and Monday 11 December 2023 at 1.00pm

The meeting ended at 12.00 pm.