



Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 11 December 2023 at 1.00 pm

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 Aqeela Choudhry	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Zaker Choudhry	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Timothy Huxtable	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Carol Hyatt	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Martin McCarthy	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Saddak Miah	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Josh O'Nyons	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor David Stanley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Dan Essex	Governance & Scrutiny Manager
Councillor Barbara McGarrity (joined by MS Teams)	City of Wolverhampton Council
Lyndsey Roberts	Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Anne Shaw	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands

Item No.

40. Inquorate Meeting

This meeting was inquorate and therefore any decisions taken at the meeting would be submitted to the WMCA Board on 12 January 2024.

41. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Amo Hussain, Councillor Alan Taylor, Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner, Councillor Emma Marshall and Councillor Ian Nellins.

42. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

43. Chair's Remarks

The Chair addressed the committee regarding the scrutiny protocol, and acknowledged its assurance that the committee was on the right path but emphasised the need for continued improvement. He directed the committee to focus on refining its processes. He also noted that the last two meetings were inquorate, and encouraged all committee members to attend all meetings or send a substitute if they were able to. The Chair asked the committee to recognise the importance of their presence for more effective decision-making.

Councillor Mary Locke submitted a petition on behalf of Councillor K Scott and Councillor R Pocock, with a request for it to be forwarded to National Express promptly. The petition urged National Express to provide additional buses for pupils at John Wilmott School and Fairfax School, ensuring their timely commute to and from school and requested Birmingham City Council's support for the initiative.

44. Minutes - 30 October 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record. It was agreed that the action log would be updated to include actions that have been completed, along with the respective dates of completion.

Resolved:

The minutes and actions be agreed.

45. HS2: Cancellation of Phases 2a, 2b and HS2 East

The Strategic Lead for Rail Policy provided an update on the HS2 programme, following the Government's announcement on 4 December in respect of the cancellation of the HS2 line north of Birmingham.

In response to a query from Councillor Carol Hyatt, members discussed capacity on the network and the feasibility of accommodating more than three trains per hour at bottleneck areas on the network.

Highlighting the potential for unlocking new stations in the Solihull and Castle Vale and Castle Bromwich area, Councillor Timothy Huxtable suggested examining the Midlands Rail Hub and new station proposals to envision a broader improvement of the region. Councillor Pervez Akhtar expressed concern about the loss of speed and capacity, and the implications that this would have for economic growth.

Resolved:

(1) The report was noted.

(2) A further report be submitted to a future meeting of the committee when there was greater clarity regarding the funds available for rail improvements following the cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham.

46. Future Bus Policy Delivery Options - Update

The Director of Integrated Transport Services and the Head of Network Transformation sought views from the committee on the ongoing bus options work. The Head of Network Transformation presented an update on the Enhanced Partnership Scheme, offering the committee a comprehensive background and overview. He reported that the scheme involved evaluating the existing Enhanced Partnership Scheme, conducting a Full Franchising Assessment, and considering municipal bus company operations, particularly those that existed before the deregulation of bus services in 1986.

Councillor Carol Hyatt enquired about the funding sources for subsidised bus services over the next five years. The Head of Network Transformation clarified that the assessment had a long-term perspective, and ongoing discussions were addressing the source of short-term funding.

The Chair enquired about the involvement of the committee in the recommendations and the Director of Integrated Transport Services confirmed that all full business cases would be brought to the committee for scrutiny. The Chair requested that lessons learned be incorporated into the update, and an outlined timetable would be shared with Governance Services for further discussion and dissemination to members. Councillor Timothy Huxtable encouraged officers to include the Bus Alliance in their considerations.

Councillor David Stanley expressed concern about the services being experienced by customers. The Director of Integrated Transport Services provided assurance that efforts were being made in this area to mitigate issues. The Chair acknowledged the commendable service by other operators under challenging circumstances and highlighted the commitment to addressing challenges and seeking improvements in the bus services, acknowledging the perspectives and concerns raised by committee members.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress being made in considering future options for delivering bus services in the region be noted.
- (2) The timetable for completing the Full Franchising Assessment in preparation for a decision to progress further to audit and consultation by the WMCA Board in July 2024 be noted.
- (3) The progress made through existing Enhanced Partnership provisions led and agreed through the former Transport Delivery Committee be noted.
- (4) The position associated with the consideration of municipal bus companies be noted.

47. Draft Safer Travel Plan 2024 - 27

The Head of Security and Policing presented the Safer Travel Plan, seeking to provide an update and engage with members of the Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the status of the Draft Safer Travel Plan for the period 2024–2027 and its next steps. The existing Safer Travel Plan was set to expire in March 2024, resulting in the development of the new draft plan in collaboration with various stakeholders through the Safer Travel Governance Board.

He reported that over the past six months, extensive consultations and discussions had taken place to formulate and agree on the themes of the new plan. Key themes in the update included emphasising the goals of making travellers feel safer, be safer, and promoting a connected network. He outlined the next steps in the plan's development and informed the committee that a comprehensive report would be received in the summer of 2024.

Councillor Tim Huxtable inquired about the connection between the Safer Streets Fund and the Safer Travel Plan and how they influenced each other. The Head of Security and Policing explained that collaboration with local police, both on the network and within the local community, was crucial to reducing issues on the travel network.

In response to a question from Councillor Robert Tromans, the Head of Security and Policing informed the committee that Transport for West Midlands had its own drone team, and data sharing protocols are in place, audited every 12 months to ensure compliance and transparency.

Resolved:

- (1) The latest position with regards to the Draft Safer Travel Plan 2024 – 27 be noted.
- (2) It be noted that a further update will be brought to the Transport Delivery & Scrutiny Overview Committee in July 2024, with the intention of publishing the new Safer Travel Plan in Autumn 2024.
- (3) The Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee wished to make no further comments on this report to the WMCA Board at this stage.

48. Financial Monitoring Report

Councillor Pervez Akhtar presented the financial monitoring report. He provided the committee with the financial position as at 30 September 2023 related to the financial position of the Combined Authority's Transport Delivery Revenue and Capital Budgets.

The Head of Finance Business Partnering and Strategic Planning reminded the committee of the Proposed Budget Q&A on 14 December 2023.

Resolved:

- (1) The position at 30 September 2023 against the Transport for West Midlands Revenue Budget which showed a favourable variance of £2.2m was noted.
- (2) It was noted that the Transport for West Midlands Capital Programme position at 30 September 2023 showed a favourable variance of £47.0m for WMCA delivered schemes and a favourable variance of £7.4m for externally delivered schemes against budget.

49. City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement – Quarter 2 Financial Year 2022/23

The Head of Transport Strategy & Planning presented a report to update the Transport Delivery Overview and Scrutiny committee with an update on the £1.05Bn West Midlands City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement ('CRSTS') programme. He shared with the committee an update on the program's progress.

He communicated the significant events impacting the program, including change in guidance and advice from the Department for Transport (DfT). He outlined the requirements for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and reporting within the CRSTS program; and provided an update on the overall progress.

During the discussion that followed, Councillor Robert Alden raised a concern regarding the absence of risk information. He suggested that future reports should delve into more detailed information. Councillor Timothy Huxtable noted the absence of scrutiny items related to the park and ride programme and proposed its addition to the work program. He further mentioned the ongoing efforts of the Executive Director for TfWM in developing improved dashboard reporting, which is anticipated to be ready by Q4 of the next year.

Councillor Martin McCarthy requested an update on the North Solihull/Arden Cross projects, and the Head of Transport Strategy & Planning confirmed that a connectivity study was currently underway. The study aimed to identify areas in North Solihull, East Birmingham, and other regions with poor connectivity where improvements could be made. The Executive Director for TfWM expected the study to be completed by April 2024.

Councillor Carol Hyatt raised concerns about mitigating the effects of inflation. In response, the Head of Transport Strategy & Planning clarified that the rebaseline was designed to address inflationary impacts, with some delivery and design projects having undergone reassessment, with funding redirected towards larger or earlier projects.

Resolved:

- (1) The contents of the report be endorsed by the committee, including:
 - (a) The status of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement change control application submitted to Department for Transport.
 - (b) The terms, process and content of the CRSTS 1 programme re-base submission approved by WMCA Board on 15th September 2023.
 - (c) The M&E and reporting requirements associated with the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.
 - (d) The Quarter 2 FY23-24 progress reported.

50. Member Engagement Groups – Progress Report

The Scrutiny Champions of the committee each gave verbal updates of their Member Engagement Group progress reports. They invited the wider committee to attend their next meetings.

Resolved:

- (1) The committee received an update on the cancellation of HS2 north of the West Midlands.
- (2) The committee endorsed the use of other local home language radio stations be considered by Transport for West Midlands.

51. Work Programme

The Statutory Scrutiny Officer shared the WMCA Forward Plan and the committees work programme. She reminded them that the work programme was a live document and encouraged the committee to input into it. The work programme was noted.

52. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 14 December at 2:00pm (Mayoral Q&A; Proposed Draft Budget)

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm.