

Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Wednesday 23 March 2022 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Barbara McGarrity (Vice-Chair)	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Ian Kettle	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Martin McCarthy	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Emma Crowton	Implementation Manager - Programme Development
Graham Jones	Commonwealth Games Technical Director
Lyndsey Roberts	Scrutiny Officer
Anne Shaw	Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands
Adam Tranter	Cycling and Walking Commissioner
Colin Whitehouse	Senior Development Manager

Item No. Title

43. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gurdev Hayre (Coventry) and Councillor Thabiso Mabena (Sandwell).

44. Inquorate Meeting

The Chair indicated that the sub-committee was inquorate and therefore the decisions taken would be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 11 July for formal approval.

46. Minutes - 17 January and 23 February 2022

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 January and 23 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

47. WMCA's Cycling & Walking Commissioner

The sub-committee received an update from Adam Tranter, West Midlands Walking & Cycling Commissioner, on the active travel activities within the region.

Members discussed the work being undertaken with Active Travel England to secure funding (Active Travel Fund 3) for the region, the bidding process, normalising cycling, the availability of a safe environment for cyclist and pedestrians, and the importance of a variety of travel options.

Resolved:

(1) The report be noted.

48. Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 Delivery Update

The sub-committee considered a report from the Implementation Manager, Transport for West Midlands, that provided an update on the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2.

In November 2020, the West Midlands received £13.1m, to deliver a programme of active travel schemes. Tranche 2 schemes were delivering the long-term vision for the West Midlands, which supported health and economic recovery and provided transformational active travel networks that enabled long lasting behaviour change.

The WMCA managed the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 grant, with allocations paid to each local authority upon delivery of schemes through a grant agreement milestone-based programme management approach. There were bi-monthly progress reports to the Department for Transport capturing delivery updates and changes to the programme. This would continue until completion.

With regard to the allocations paid to each local authority and the spend made to date, members were assured that where spend had been low, this would be carried forward into the next financial year.

In terms of planning, the sub-committee noted the internal and external arrangements in place to ensure the provision of cycling facilities for new developments, including the attribution of s106 funding, the Government's proposal for Active Travel England to have statutory consultee requirements for developments over 100 - 150 dwellings and the need to utilise local authority planning policy frameworks.

Resolved:

(1) The delivery progress of the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 be noted.

49. Commonwealth Games Update - Community Engagement Typical Plan

The sub-committee received a presented from the Commonwealth Games Technical Director on the progress being made with the transport preparations for the Commonwealth Games.

Members discussed and shared comments on the level of scrutiny of the transport plans, community engagement events and dissemination of information, the impact of the Games on residents and businesses, the use of community drop in forums, member engagement sessions, inclusivity and accessibility of the Games and timescales.

The first results from the spectator survey had now been received that would help to guide the travel demand management plan. The results had indicated that there would be a high proportion of people that would use their car to travel to the games and only 30% stating that they would use the train network. There was also a low awareness of the free public transport and Park & Ride offer available.

With regards to the opening of Perry Bar railway station, the Executive Director for Transport West Midlands explained that this facility was due to open at the end of May 2022.

Resolved:

- (1) The report be noted.
- (2) The sub-committee be kept updated of any developments and progress in terms of raising the level of awareness of the free public transport offer.

50. Tackling Violence Against Women & Girls and the Work of the Transport Champions

The sub-committee received a presentation on the Government's strategy to tackle violence against women and girls. In July 2021 the Executive Director of Transport for the West Midlands and the Chief Executive were appointed as the first Violence Against Women & Girls Transport Champions, to address safety on the transport networks.

The sub-committee received an overview of the recommendations that had been submitted to the Department for Transport that focussed on the improvements to make the transport network safer for women and girls. Members enquired about the process and research that been undertaken which led to the series of recommendations submitted to Government.

Members expressed concern at there not being a recommendation with regards to improving bus reliability, as this was thought to have an impact on women feeling vulnerable when alone on the transport network late at night. It was emphasised that the public transport system needed to be trustworthy to avoid women and girls feeling this way. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands agreed with the comments made and added that, as part of the National Bus Strategy, there was a requirement for bus operators to provide operational performance information. She proposed that the sub-committee reviewed Transport for West Midlands's projects that were looking at producing reliable information assets as part of its work programme for 2022/23.

Resolved:

- (1) The presentation be noted.

51. Progress Update: Delivery of West Midlands Metro Extensions

The sub-committee received an update on the delivery of West Midlands Metro extensions.

The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands provided an overview of the Birmingham City Centre Westside Metro extension and its challenges, including the changes in traffic management and safety. A solution had now been sought and work continued. In terms of the Wolverhampton Metro extension and the interface with Wolverhampton railway station, discussions had been held with the City of Wolverhampton Council and Network Rail regarding light rail standards, and work had now recommenced. It was envisaged that all works would be completed ahead of Commonwealth Games.

In terms of the testing of the trams, Councillor Martin McCarthy questioned the status of the design verification activity that generated the test plan. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands clarified that the testing and commissioning that had taken place during the delivery of the metro infrastructure was to check that it was safe and compliant.

Resolved

(1) The updated be noted.

52. Midland Metro Closure November 2021: Lessons Learnt – Transport for West Midlands

The sub-committee received a report from the Interim Director of Network Resilience that noted that lessons learnt by teams across Transport for West Midlands following the Metro closure in November 2021. The report also explored the best way to implement changes for the future to ensure an improved customer service.

Physical cracks were identified on the Metro fleet, potentially impacting the safety and integrity of the service and a decision was taken to close the Metro service following ongoing assessment of its fleet. It was announced that there would be no service from 15 November 2021 until further notice (at least four weeks). This was later altered to no service from 13 November until further notice. The closure lasted for 32 days, from 13 November until 15 December 2021.

The sub-committee discussed and shared comments on the impact the closure had on its customers and how Transport for West Midlands and partners worked together to address the challenges and to provide alternative modes of transport to help alleviate the impact on customers.

Resolved:

- (1) The update on the lessons learnt across Transport for West Midlands following the Midland Metro closure in November 2021, in particular the next steps and recommendations for future actions, be noted.

53. Work Programme

The sub-committee discussed its work programme of business for consideration at its future meetings and at the WMCA Board.

Resolved:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.40am.