



Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Thursday 14 July 2022 at 10.00 am

Minutes

Present

Councillor Cathy Bayton
Councillor Chaman Lal
Councillor Martin McCarthy
Councillor Karen Simms
Councillor Vera Waters

Association of Black Country Authorities
Birmingham City Council
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance

Councillor Barbara McGarrity (Teams)
Dan Essex
Linda Horne

Graham Jones

Lyndsey Roberts
Satish Mistry

City of Wolverhampton Council
Governance Services Manager
Executive Director of Finance & Business
Hub
Transport for West Midlands Technical
Director
Scrutiny Officer
Interim Director of Law & Governance

**Item Title
No.**

54. Appointment of Chair

The sub-committee noted that at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 July, Councillor Cathy Bayton had been appointed as the Chair of this sub-committee for 2022/23.

55. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rupinder Singh (Coventry).

56. Chair's Remarks

(a) Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the year and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

(b) Wednesbury - Brierley Hill Metro Extension

A member of the public was in attendance and the Chair invited them to address the committee in relation to concerns that they had regarding the Wednesbury - Brierley Hill metro extension. The member of the public reported:

"I am asking for a slight change in policy so that the Wednesbury - Brierley Hill extension continues along the railway line from Dudley (Castle Hill) down onto the main railway line between Worcestershire, Dudley and Derby at Cinder Bank roundabout where it will continue to Harts Hill tram stop. But from there it is due to leave the railway line to go into the Waterfront and Merry Hill, but as I see it the problem is that there is a 400m wide canal embankment that takes Dudley's premier canal and it is a lovely public open space, the nearest thing that Merry Hill has to a nature reserve.

I have a landscape enhancement scheme at one end against the iron wall which holds up the high plateau which is designated for residential development. If the WMCA continues with your current policy of putting the tram across this 400m embankment it will take quite a large corner of that land, a brownfield site that is desperately needed for housing. I am suggesting that you keep the tram on the railway line - it still could have a tram stop at Brierley Hill, another one at Withymoor and end up at Stourbridge Junction, which joins up with the national railway network and you will also save £100 million because that is the cost for a concrete and steel double-track standard gauge track.

So please consider this revised infrastructure proposal with the tram line staying on the railway line all the way into Stourbridge Junction and that would save the trees, environment and would save £100m"

The sub-committee requested a response be submitted to its next meeting in respect of the suggested proposal.

57. Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was agreed that the appointment of a Vice-Chair for the Transport Scrutiny Sub-Committee 2022/23 be deferred to the next meeting.

58. Minutes - 23 March 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

59. Commonwealth Games - Transport Update

The sub-committee received a presentation from the Transport for West Midlands Technical Director on the latest transport preparations for the Commonwealth Games.

The presentation provided an update on the operational plan, readiness and contingency plans, games-time operational control and on the biggest challenges. Members commented on the additional bus services in operation for the games and had hoped that the provision of services within other parts of the region would not be affected.

In relation to the Sandwell Aquatics Centre, a test event had been undertaken on 21 May and lessons had been learnt regarding parking issues. A shuttle service would now operate from The Hawthorns to the Sandwell Aquatics Centre. Work had also been undertaken in Perry Barr to ensure that businesses and residents were aware of the arrangements regarding road restrictions. In addition, members were disappointed that the Wolverhampton tram extension would not be completed in time for the Commonwealth Games.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

60. Progress Report on Transport Governance Review

The sub-committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Law & Governance on the transport governance review.

The report detailed the interviews that had been undertaken to date as well as outstanding interviews and the work that had been done in comparing the transport governance arrangements of comparable combined authorities. It was now intended to complete the mapping exercise and interviews by mid-July before the development of a provisional report that would include the proposals for changes to the transport governance arrangements of the WMCA. A final report would be submitted to the WMCA Board in November 2022 for approval.

The WMCA's intention in undertaking the review was to have a suite of proposals to streamline the transport decision-making arrangements at member level to make it transparent, accountable, effective, and efficient as possible. In addition, it was also to learn from other combined authorities and review best practice from the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny and other bodies.

The sub-committee discussed and shared comments on the comparative work with Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire combined authorities, including its devolved powers and scrutiny models and functions and their effectiveness. The importance of ensuring that the informal transport governance bodies and mechanisms fed into the formal transport decision-making governance structures to better inform the formal decision-making process was stressed, along with the need for clarity and for officers to understand the correct reporting pathway for transport reports.

The sub-committee considered that it would be useful if the comparison work being undertaken with other combined authorities also looked at the influence they had over local bus networks through their governance processes.

Resolved:

- (1) The update on the transport governance review be noted; and
- (2) The governance review report be submitted to this sub-committee prior to its submission to the WMCA Board in November 2022.

61. Work Programme

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

Resolved:

The work programme be noted.

62. Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

- (1) In accordance with s100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business as it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as specified in the paragraphs of the Act.

63. Metro Affordability

The sub-committee received an update of the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub on affordability issues related to the Wednesbury - Brierley Hill metro extension. She provided an overview of the current challenges, potential mitigations to fund the scheme and future funding opportunities that would be discussed further at the next meeting of the WMCA Board.

Resolved:

The mitigations set out in the report be endorsed.

64. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 8 September at 10.00am

The meeting ended at 12.00pm.