



**Transport Delivery Committee**

**Monday 9 January 2023 at 1.00 pm**

**Minutes**

**Present**

Councillor Richard Worrall (Chair)	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Timothy Huxtable (Vice-Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Mary Locke (Vice-Chair)	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Zaker Choudhry	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Shabrana Hussain	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Carol Hyatt	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Anne Millward	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Josh O'Nyons	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Clare Simm	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor David Stanley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Julie Webb	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

**In Attendance via Microsoft Teams**

Councillor Robert Grinsell	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
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**Item Title**  
**No.**

**49. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Linda Bigham (Coventry), Councillor Bill Gavan (Sandwell), Councillor Narinder Kaur Kooner (Birmingham), Councillor Saddack Miah (Birmingham) and Councillor Gurmeet Singh Sohal (Walsall).

**50. Chair's Remarks**

**(a) Malcolm Holmes, Director of Rail, Transport for West Midlands**

The Chair noted that Malcolm Holmes was to shortly leave Transport for West Midlands to take up a new post of General Manager at Great Central Railway. The committee expressed its thanks to Malcolm Holmes for his significant contribution towards improving rail services in the West Midlands and wished him well in his new role.

**51. Minutes - 14 November 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022 were agreed as a correct record, subject to an amendment to the list of apologies for absence that had been received to correctly spell Councillor *Clare* Simm's name.

**52. Matters Arising**

The matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting were noted.

In respect of minute no. 83 ('Capital Programme Delivery Monitoring'), the Chair indicated that the Dudley Interchange scheme site visit would now be held at 10.00am on 30 January.

In respect of the three outstanding actions identified on the Action Log relating to Dudley Interchange, the Director of Integrated Transport Services, Transport for West Midlands indicated an update on these would be submitted to the next meeting of the committee on 6 February.

**53. Forward Plan**

The forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings of the committee was noted.

**54. Financial Monitoring Report 2022/23**

The committee considered a report from the Executive Director of Finance & Business Hub setting out the financial position as at 30 November 2022 in respect of the transport delivery revenue and capital budgets.

The year to date position on the transport revenue budget showed an adverse variance of £600,000 against budget. The most notable variance at this early stage of the year related to concessions, where there was lower than budgeted patronage and fare levels. These savings had been partly offset by lower than budgeted drawdown of reserves to support the overall budget as they had not yet been required. Overall, capital programme expenditure totalled £181m, which was £78.6m below the year to date budget, with the variance primarily contained within the Investment Programme portfolio.

Councillor Robert Grinsell noted that the maintenance costs of the metro were significant, and enquired as to the effect this might have on other projects that were intended to be funded from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement. The Executive Director, Transport for West Midlands explained that the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement did allow for capital renewal works and the metro works had been built into the WMCA's funding submission that had been signed off by the WMCA Board. She undertook to provide a more detailed written response to this that would be shared with all members of the committee.

Resolved:

- (1) It be noted that the year to date position as at the end of November 2022 against the Transport for West Midlands revenue budget showed an adverse variance of £600,000.
- (2) It be noted that the Transport for West Midlands capital programme expenditure as at the end of November 2022 totalled £181m, which was £78.6m below budget.

**55. Rail Delivery Monitoring Report**

The committee considered a report from the Director of Rail, Transport for West Midlands that provided an update relating to the performance, operation and delivery of rail services in the West Midlands, including West Midlands Rail Executive activity.

The report provided details on recent activity relating to rail service delivery, the Great British Railways Partnership, Midlands Railway Hub, West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy, Transport for West Midlands new stations study, the forthcoming rail fares review and the West Midlands Grand Rail Collaboration.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar noted the significant impact that the current rail industry strikes were having on services, and the damage that was being caused to passenger confidence that was still recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. He urged the Mayor to do all he could to help resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of all parties.

Councillor Robert Alden noted that there had been a marked reduction in the standards of service since Avanti West Coast had been awarded the West Coast Main Line franchise. He also sought an update on the planned timescales for completing the University station works, along with the causes of the delays to date. The Head of Rail Delivery, West Midlands Rail Executive indicated that the WMCA Board had agreed to write to Avanti West Midlands to express its own dissatisfaction with the current service when it met on 16 December 2022. He understood that Avanti West Coast was also meeting with West Midlands Trains to learn any lessons that might help improve its own services. The Executive Director, Transport for West Midlands indicated that an updated project delivery programme for the University station works would be brought to a future meeting of the committee, but she understood a number of the delays to date had been caused by the impact of construction sector inflation and the delivery pressures relating to the Commonwealth Games.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

**56. Swift Delivery Monitoring Report**

The committee considered a report from the Executive Director, Transport for West Midlands providing an update on the Swift programme, detailing recent growth in usage and satisfaction and setting out recently delivered projects and those currently in the delivery phase.

The report provided further details of those key projects that had recently been delivered, along with upcoming projects that would further develop and enhance the Swift card facility.

Councillor Clare Simm noted a recent bus journey using her Swift card when the driver had asked her which particular ticket she wishes to purchase. She understood that Swift should automatically calculate the most cost-effective ticket, rather than requiring the passenger to have a detailed knowledge of this. The Technical Director - Swift, Transport for West Midlands confirmed that this was a functionality of the Swift card and passengers did not need to be asked. He suspected it was an error by the driver during the early days of its implementation, but asked for further feedback if the issue arose again.

Councillor Carol Hyatt noted that the Oyster card in London also acted as a photo identification card, and enquired whether there were similar plans for the Swift card in the West Midlands. The Technical Director - Swift, Transport for West Midlands explained that whilst it was technically capable of operating in this way, there were currently discussions on-going as to whether the photograph should be removed from the card as it was considered a potential barrier to its wider take up due to new users being required to submit a photograph during the application process.

The Chair noted that there was currently no Lead Member for Swift and proposed that the committee should appoint one of its members to this important role.

Resolved:

- (1) The progress made towards the delivery of the Swift programme be noted.
- (2) The increase in both growth of Swift usage and customer satisfaction be welcomed.
- (3) Councillor Clare Simm be appointed the committee's Lead Member for Swift.

## **57. Transport Services Update**

The committee received an update from the Director of Integrated Transport Services, Transport for West Midlands on the latest activity related to the recovery of the transport network and services from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first tranche of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding was expected to be received on 20 January, which would allow the activities included within the plan to commence. The Government's Bus Recovery Grant funding was due to finish at the end of March. There was currently no funding that had been agreed to continue this support, but the Government had indicated a willingness to continue to support bus services after this date and was currently considering options. Further information on this was expected from the Government in February. There was concern in respect of how a delay in funding certainty would impact on the registration of bus services as operators were required to provide notification by 20 January of those services they intended to withdraw on 31 March.

Resolved:

The update be noted.

**58. Update on the West Midlands Bus Network**

The committee considered a report from the Director of Integrated Transport Services, Transport for West Midlands on an update on the review of bus services in the West Midlands which launched on 1 January.

The report provided further details on the outcome of the comprehensive operator-led network review that was undertaken last year with the intention of establishing a network that operators believed was sustainable in the longer term. This review had resulted in Transport for West Midlands identifying 39 services that were potentially 'at risk', and the report set out in detail the action then taken as a result of this, including the eight services that had been retained with no changes.

Councillor Robert Grinsell reported that he had contacted the [memberenquiries@tfwm.org.uk](mailto:memberenquiries@tfwm.org.uk) email address on a number of occasions with matters he required a response to and to date had not received any responses. A number of other members of the committee shared similar experiences. The Head of Bus, Transport for West Midlands apologised for this, noting that he understood the email inbox had been receiving a considerably high number of enquiries. He undertook to respond to Councillor Robert Grinsell's responses directly after the meeting.

Councillor Robert Alden welcomed the retention of school bus services that had been threatened with deregistration, but called upon bus operators to refrain from proposing deregistrations during the school year, rather than waiting until the end of the school year to review their services. In respect of bus service no. 46, the Head of Bus, Transport for West Midlands undertook to send a further briefing note on this service to Councillor Julie Webb.

Resolved:

- (1) The report be noted.
- (2) The Mayor and the Portfolio Lead for Transport be requested to do their utmost to persuade the Government to adequately fund bus services in the West Midlands in the long term beyond March 2023.

**59. Notice of Motion**

The committee considered a notice of motion submitted by Councillor Richard Worrall.

Resolved:

The following motion be approved, as amended:

“Transport Delivery Committee is concerned that a bus operator serving the West Midlands is presently unwilling to take part in the Government’s £2 maximum single fare initiative. This not only penalises affected bus passengers in particular areas of the West Midlands, but also leads to would-be bus users’ confusion as to which bus operators are, and are not, in the scheme. We ask Transport for West Midlands to contact the operator in question as soon as possible to (a) urge them to reconsider their view to joining the scheme at the earliest, and (b) to ask them to set out their reasons for not taking part.

This information is to be communicated to all Transport Delivery Committee members and to the meeting of the committee on 6 February 2023. Furthermore, we note that this is a short term scheme funded by the Department for Transport until the end of March only, when we believe there would be major benefit in an adequately funded, affordable longer term Department for Transport single bus fare scheme. We therefore recommend to the WMCA that they ask the Department for Transport to extend the scheme on a long term basis.”

#### **60. Member Engagement Groups Update**

The committee considered a report of the Governance Services Officer noting recent developments and meetings of the six Member Engagement Groups. The report highlighted the discussions held at the following meetings:

- Safe & Sustainable Travel MEG - 5 December
- Finance & Performance MEG - 12 December
- Rail & Metro MEG - 12 December
- Putting Passengers First MEG - 14 December
- Air Quality, Congestion & Environmental Impact MEG - 4 January

Councillor David Stanley noted the issue he had raised at the Putting Passengers First MEG in respect of the potential confusion caused to passengers when real-time information displays were showing scheduled travel information. The Head of Bus, Transport for West Midlands indicated that he would provide a more detailed briefing to members on this issue at the next MEG.

Resolved:

The recent activities of the committee’s Member Engagement Groups be noted.

**61. Transport for West Midlands Capital Pressures**

The committee considered a report that had been submitted to the WMCA Board on 16 December 2022 on the current budget pressures being experienced on transport capital projects in delivery, the reasons for these and the potential solutions available to ensure that they could be completed successfully within a managed way which prevented any revenue cost exposure to the WMCA and local authorities.

Over the last couple of years, there had been a number of projects increase in costs due to scope changes and construction challenges which had emerged on site. Standard practice was to allow for programme and budget contingencies to accommodate these pressures and this had been the case in all Transport for West Midlands projects. However, the last few years had thrown up a number of extraordinary further challenges, notably in relation to hyperinflation which was a national and global issue. The potential scale meant that Transport for West Midlands was unable to contain this within the existing capital resources and was therefore required to take some actions to mitigate any cost exposure to the WMCA.

The WMCA was heavily constrained in terms of the discretion it could exercise over its capital funding. Whilst the overall programme was substantial, many projects were funded on a project specific basis. The Transforming Cities Fund was the only pot of funding which was fully devolved to the region for local leaders to make the ultimate investment decisions. Whilst the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement was also a devolved pot, the Department for Transport and the Treasury did retain some influence in how the funding was used to deliver clearly documented deliverables and outcomes.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

**62. Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved:

In accordance with s100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it was likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as specified in paragraph 3 of the Act.

**63. Confidential Appendix to Transport Capital Pressures Report**

The committee considered a confidential appendix report that had been submitted to the WMCA Board on 16 December 2022 on the scheme specific details concerning the Transport for West Midlands capital pressures which were considered commercially sensitive.

The report summarised the projects which were exposed to the issues highlighted in minute no. 61 above, together with indicative estimates of additional budget requirements post mitigation. Three schemes required an immediate uplift in budget, which the report sought to address. The remaining schemes were shown as early warnings, but all were highly likely to mature into a cost pressure to some degree over the short to medium term.

Councillor Robert Alden highlighted the delays to the University station project and sought assurances that there would be no further budget allocation required. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands indicated that work was currently being undertaken to rebaseline the project and fully understand the remaining costs. Once this work was completed, expected within the next few weeks, greater certainty on overall project costs would be known.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar sought assurances that Transport for West Midlands was undertaking proper planning for these projects. The Executive Director of Transport for West Midlands explained that all projects had a risk register that included mitigation measures, but the nature of construction was often that some costs would only become apparent during the course of carrying out the works.

Resolved:

The report be noted.

- 64. Date of Next Meeting**  
Monday 6 February 2023 at 1.00pm.

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm.