

Item 2 - Scrutiny Committee – Minutes

Meeting: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 18 December 2019

Venue: Holiday Inn

Members:

Cllr Paul Haslam
Cllr Manisha Kaushik
Cllr James Shorrock
Cllr David O'Hara
Cllr Rod Fletcher
Cllr Andrew Cooper
Cllr Neil Hughes
Cllr Mike Stathers
Cllr Roger Jones
Cllr Sean Chaytor
Cllr Matthew Salter
Cllr Patrick McKinley
Cllr David Hasthorpe
Cllr John Davison
Cllr Carl Johnson
Cllr Chris Lamb
Cllr Steve Parish*
Cllr Dave Taylor

North Yorkshire (Chair)
West Yorkshire (Vice-Chair)
Blackburn with Darwen
Blackpool
Cheshire East
Cheshire West and Chester
Cumbria
East Riding of Yorkshire
Greater Manchester
Hull City Council
Lancashire
Liverpool City Region
North East Lincolnshire
North Lincolnshire
North of Tyne Combined Authority
Sheffield City Region
Warrington
York

Officers in Attendance:

Barry White
Gary Rich
Iain Craven
Gareth Sutton
Tim Foster
Jim Bamford
Julie Openshaw
Steve Howes
Lucy Hudson
Rosemary Lyon
Owen Wilson
Deborah Dimock
Peter Molyneux

Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer
Finance Director
Financial Controller
Head of Economic Advice
Head of Investment Planning
Head of Legal Services
Interim Strategic Director, IST
Lead Officer Freight and Logistics
Legal and Democratic Services Officer
Major Roads Strategy Manager
Solicitor
Strategic Roads Director

Also In Attendance

Phil Stockford
Anna Jane Hunter

Highways England
Network Rail

Apologies:

Cllr Jane Evison
Cllr John McElroy
Cllr Michael Mordey
Cllr Lia Nici
Cllr Cathy Mitchell

East Riding of Yorkshire
North East Combined Authority
North East Combined Authority
North East Lincolnshire
Warrington

*Substitute Member in attendance

1.0 Appointment of Minority Vice-Chair (v)

- 1.1 The Legal Services Officer explained to Members that the Scrutiny Committee requires a Chair and two Vice Chairs. At the previous meeting a majority party Vice Chair had been appointed and the appointment of a minority party Vice Chair had been deferred until this meeting.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Hughes be appointed minority Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

2.0 Welcome and Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 The Chair welcomed Members and apologies were noted.

The Chair informed Members that there would be some alteration to the order of items on the agenda.

2.2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

3.0 Minutes of the Previous Committee and Matters Arising

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee held on 28 August 2019 were considered.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee held on 28 August 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.

4.0 Infrastructure Resilience (r)(p)

- 4.1 The infrastructure resilience report was received by Members.

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- 4.2 A presentation from Anna Jane Hunter of Network [Rail?] was received by Members.

Context was provided on the issues that have been experienced on the rail network in recent months. Whilst extreme weather conditions have been partly responsible for some of the issues, ageing assets were also highlighted as a key factor, with some assets dating back to the 1970s.

Ms Hunter explained that this was a national issue and was not unique to the north of the country.

Network Rail is funded in 5-year cycles with the current funding having been agreed in April 2018. She stated that Transport for the North considers that more money needs to be spent on weather resilience.

In the last 3 weeks Network Rail has invested in equipment to help deal with floods and have purchased 5 additional bigger and better pumps, which have been installed in strategic places where flooding is most likely to occur.

- 4.3 Councillor Chaytor explained that he had requested that this item be included on the agenda due to the issues in South Yorkshire which have affected commuters and the moving of freight in the area.

He stated that it is essential that everything possible should be done to ensure that lines remain open and asked what was being done to enable this.

Ms Hunter stated that Network Rail need to get better at understanding what other landowners or occupiers are doing near lines. She highlighted an example where a development had been built near to the lines in Doncaster and in order to prevent flooding in the building the water had been diverted towards the railway line ; a similar incident had also happened in Ashton.

- 4.4 The Chair questioned whether planning committees should include representatives from rail; Members confirmed that rail matters are taken into account.

He also suggested that rail companies may want to consider having more experts to advise on the issue of climate change.

The Chair enquired as to whether lessons had been learnt. Ms Hunter explained that this is part of the review on the Yorkshire flooding with the key being how they learn to deal with Day C onwards, following an incident.

She added that climate change and the tolerance for change in weather is being looked at. They are considering how they change standards for higher and lower temperatures.

- 4.5 Councillor Salter enquired about increasing flood risks to others and whether Network Rail has been exploring using natural resources to deal with flooding risks.

Ms Hunter explained that risks to others is a constraint for them; however, they do work with other agencies on flood risk management but there are times that they are constrained by partners, such as the Environment Agency who can veto them.

On the issue of using vegetation Ms Hunter explained that this can often cause other risks for the railway.

- 4.6 Cllr Taylor stated that this issue is not going to go away and joined up thinking is required. Furthermore, he requested that conversations should be had with environment agencies about planting.

- 4.7 The issue of snow and trains not running was also discussed. Ms Hunter highlighted a number of reasons as to why they are unable to run.

Switzerland was highlighted as a country where they have significant snowfall but trains are still able to run.

Cllr Hughes asked about who is responsible for funding buses when needed. Whilst Network Rail is responsible for the funding the procurement process is the responsibility of the individual rail companies.

- 4.8 Cllr McKinley stressed the importance of not working in silos and the importance of planning; he commented that this is something that Transport for the North should be highlighting.

- 4.9 Cllr Parish questioned whether drivers just know one route to a location or if they knew all possible routes.

Ms Hunter explained that they know the core routes and also diversionary routes but have to do a route once every 25 weeks to maintain competency. She explained that there is less knowledge of diversionary routes.

- 4.10 Electrified lines were discussed, and Cllr Fletcher asked if it would be possible to make sure more bridges are raised than tracks lowered during the process as lowered tracks cause flooding.

Ms Hunter explained that it would not be possible to do this as the public will object to some of the bridges being raised.

- 4.11 Ms Hunter explained that when there is a major weather event, contingencies are in place with other agencies; however, when the event is less significant the work is less joined up.

- 4.12 A presentation from Phil Stockford of Highways England was received by Members.

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- 4.13 Cllr Taylor stated that Highways England were good on emergency planning but not as good on resilience and in view of climate change, weather will only become more extreme.
- Mr Stockford explained that whilst the way they are set up to deal with everyday type weather works well it is more difficult to deal with more exceptional conditions.
- 4.14 Cllr Salter raised the issue of the impact road closures have on other road users. He highlighted the problems that occur when the A6 is closed and the enormous impact this has on surrounding areas and asked how much this is taken into account when diverting traffic.
- Mr Stockford explained that they work with local authorities in respect of diversion routes. Highways England have agreed that over the next 5 years they are going to bring diversion routes up to a minimum standard at their own cost.
- 4.15 Cllr Chaytor asked whether, in view of recent events in Yorkshire, further contingencies will be put in place.
- Mr Stockford explained that this was not his geographical area, but he will ensure that Andrew Sharnick will contact Cllr Chaytor to discuss this.
- Members were signposted to the severe weather plan which can be found on Resilience direct.
- 4.16 Members asked about surface water and Mr Stockford explained that Highways England plan to resurfacing 80% of the network over the next 5 years.
- RESOLVED:** That the presentations of Network Rail and Highways England be noted.

The Committee adjourned at 12:55p.m. and resumed at 13:20p.m.

5.0 Partnership Board - membership review (r)

- 5.1 The report on the Partnership Board membership review was received by Members and background was provided by the Legal Services Officer who tabled copies of the Terms of Reference of the Partnership Board.

The Legal Services Officer explained that at the September Transport for the North Board, Mayor Rotheram proposed that members of the TUC be co-opted onto the Transport for the North Board. It had been resolved that a more detailed report looking at extending the membership of the Partnership Board would be presented to Members at the next Board meeting.

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- 5.2 Members discussed the role of the Partnership Board, whether the membership should be widened and whether it should continue to meet in private.

Members were broadly supportive of the idea that the Partnership Board should be widened as it was considered that this would provide more diversity to the meeting. Members also considered that it would help the Partnership Board in its advisory capacity to the Board, if the Partnership Board were to have a different membership. It was suggested that as well as the TUC, other new members that should be considered include; a representative from an environmental organisation, disability group, active travel, train and bus companies, young people and passenger groups.

Members believed Partnership Board being held in public would provide a greater openness.

- 5.3 Members reviewed the wording of the role of the Partnership Board in the Terms of Reference and agreed that minor changes should be made.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Transport for the North Board that they consider a wider review of the Partnership Board and its Membership;
- 2) That the report be noted;
- 3) That the Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Transport for the North Board that membership of the Partnership Board be extended to include a representative from an environmental body, a disability group, a passenger group and the TUC;
- 4) That the Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Transport for the North Board that meetings of the Partnership Board be held in public;
- 5) That the following changes be recommended to be made to the role of the Partnership Board in the Terms of Reference:
 - That in Paragraph (d) the word "business" be deleted so that it reads 'To represent to Transport for the North the wider interests of the community'
 - That paragraph (g) includes the word adoption and that it should now read 'To on the development and adoption of the Strategic Transport Plan.'
 - That paragraph (h) be deleted

6.0 Draft Business Plan (r)

- 6.1 The report and presentation of the Finance Director was received by Members.

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- 6.2 The Finance Director explained that due to the combination of previous decisions that had been made by the TfN Board, and the conditionality of the grants received from DfT, there was limited scope for new activity within the business plan for 2020/21.

- 6.3 Cllr Jones asked if the £10 million core funding is going to be increased.

The Finance Director explained that Transport for the North are still working to the original funding envelope that was set in 2015. The delay into 2020 of the Spending Review that was originally planned for 2019 had led to this funding envelope being "rolled" into 2020/21.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7.0 Draft Assurance Framework (p)

- 7.1 The Assurance Framework presentation was received by Members.
- 7.2 The Chair sought clarity as to whether a further report on the Framework would be presented to the February Scrutiny Committee meeting, and it was confirmed that it would be.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8.0 Budget Update - Revision 2-2019/20 (r) (p)

- 8.1 The report and presentation of the Finance Director was received by Members.
- 8.2 The Finance Director explained that the Revision 2 budget forecasting would be presented to the January 2020 Transport for the North Board. Revision 2 represented a reduction in forecast expenditure of £4.9m compared to that in the Revision 1 forecast. The Finance Director stated that 85% of the underspend highlighted in the report related to the Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and Integrated and Smart Travel (IST) programmes. Whilst part of this underspend is a result of work being procured at a lower cost than was originally estimated cheaper than the original budget estimate, the bulk of the shortfall was the result of activity being delayed into the following financial year.

- 8.3 Cllr Jones questioned if the underspend could be rolled over.

Discussions have already taken place with the Department around rolling the £130 million over, and the Department had not indicated that there would be any issues with that approach.

The Finance Director explained that Phase 1&2 of IST have slipped but will be delivered and he expected that expenditure will be spent next year. Phase 3 of IST will not be spent as per the original OBT. The Finance Director indicated that Transport for the North Board will decide how to proceed in this regard at the meeting in January.

The money for these projects is made up of ring-fenced grants that can only be drawn down to deliver its intended purpose.

The Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) team is content that the money available to them for next year is sufficient for it to carry out the work on their programmes.

Resolved: That the report and presentation be noted.

9.0 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: To exclude press and public from the meeting during consideration of item 10,11 & 12 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, there would otherwise be disclosure of confidential information as defined in s100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and/or exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and that the public interest test weighed in favour of the business proceeding in exempt session.

10.0 Integrated and Smart Travel - Update (r)

- 10.1 The Integrated and Smart Travel Update report from the Chief Executive was noted. Members were invited to ask questions and make comments on the update.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the recommendations in the report be agreed.

11.0 Strategic Development Corridors, Phase 2-Qualitative Sequencing Framework (r)

- 11.1 The report on the Strategic Development Corridors, Phase 2-Qualitative Sequencing Framework was noted. Members were invited to ask questions and make comments on the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted, and the recommendations in the report be approved.

12.0 Northern Powerhouse Rail Programme Update (r)

The report on the Northern Powerhouse Rail Programme Update was noted and Members were invited to ask questions and make comments on the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.