

## Notes of **Inquorate** Transport Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2021

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### Item 1 – Welcome and apologies

Attendees (9/11): Stephen Baines (sub), Amanda Parsons-Hulse (C), Dot Foster, Yusra Hussain, Sharon Hamilton, Robert Finnigan, Paul Wray, Nic Stansby, Stephen Fenton.

Apologies (6): Peter Caffrey, Ruth Wood, Anthony Smith, Harry Ellis, Donald Firth, Luke Majkowski

Officers: Dave Pearson, Helen Ellerton, Khaled Berroum

***Skipped items 2 and 3 as the meeting was inquorate.***

### Item 4 – Scrutiny and governance arrangements

Members received an outline of scrutiny standing orders and other governance arrangements established at the Combined Authority Annual Meeting.

In questions and discussions, members sought clarification on a number of things including:

- The status of York members: York members have the same rights and responsibilities as all other scrutiny members (e.g. working groups, call-in etc) apart from voting rights, which were not conferred upon the non-constituent council (York) in the MCA's constitution.
- Police and crime matters: All scrutiny of any police and crime matter is the statutory responsibility of the Police & Crime Panel and is not within CA Scrutiny's remit. Any member comments or queries on police matters, including transport safety, should be directed to the members of the Police & Crime Panel to raise in its meetings.

### Item 5 – Chairs comments and announcements

The Chair introduced herself and her background and expressed a willingness to get to know all members individually, welcoming 1-1s.

She also congratulated Tracy Brabin on her election as first and only female metro-mayor and expressed a will to work with her to improve transport for all. There will be an opportunity to question the mayor on transport matters directly in January 2022.

The Chair also noted that:

- A new scrutiny support officer will start at the CA in October
- She met with the other scrutiny chairs and senior officers to better understand the CA's transport functions and activities going forward.

### Item 6 – Transport functions and priorities overview

Members received a high-level overview of the transport services delivered by the Combined Authority, transport policy development and current transport priorities and strategies.

Questions and discussion centred around:

- The statutory situation and process around mayoral bus franchising powers
- The bus service improvement plan currently in development
- Impact of current shortage of bus drivers
- Operational resilience of bus operators in the region

- Data on passengers using public transport before, during and after pandemic

## Item 7 – Transport Scrutiny Work Programme discussion

The Chair and members discussed a number of principles and approaches to work programming, topic selection and future meetings – including:

- The balance between pre-decision scrutiny and input into issues during development vs scrutiny of what is already in delivery vs reviewing what has already been done
- Level of resource capacity and time available to scrutiny – one scrutiny officer and three further committee meetings, with limited support from wider officer when needed.
- Reminder to focus on structural issues and wider, connecting strategic and long-term issues – not just narrow, immediate and short-term ones
- Mayors Question Time: possibly spend time at the November meeting to discuss proposed approach to questioning the Mayor at 20 January session.
- Chair suggested consideration of the Mayor’s Pledge 8 on transport: “Bring buses back under public control, introduce simpler fares & contactless ticketing and greener buses.”

Members’ discussion, questions and suggestions included the following:

### **Buses:**

A major mayoral priority is to bring bus services under public control. The long, statutory process of bus franchising has now begun. In the meantime, the CA’s current influence over the bus network will largely be through the WY Bus Partnership/Alliance, Bus Service Improvement Plan and CA funded bus services.

Areas for scrutiny to focus on include:

1. Franchising process and lessons learned from Greater Manchester
2. network coverage and connectivity
3. integration with other modes such as rail, cycling and walking
4. reliability and frequency of services
5. costs and ticketing
6. partnership working with transport operators and partner councils

### **Behaviour changes and inclusion in the context of decarbonisation:**

Another major mayoral priority is decarbonisation, following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019. It might be useful to look at the decarbonisation plans more broadly and how local government intends to influence change in behaviours necessary to meet the targets – and what levers the CA has to make an impact on people’s behaviours. Areas to look at include:

1. Research: Do we understand why people travel how they do? Have habits changed over time? What changes habits? All future policies and systems must bear these in mind.
2. ‘Seldom heard groups’: Certain seldom heard groups often rely on and need public transport the most. What are their challenges? E.g. some neurodiverse people have concerns about personal space or punctuality. Are their needs being taken adequately into account? Is there enough engagement with them in consultations?
3. Youth engagement: if young people begin habits early, they are more likely to sustain them into adulthood. E.g. difference in attitude in Greater London vs West Yorkshire youth towards public transport. What could be done? I.e. a comprehensive yellow school bus system from a younger children?

4. Reliability: Trust in buses/trains is a major factor – consequences of lateness can be severe in terms of employment or personal circumstances, are high risk modes in some areas. Problem is worse if route is fragmented and people have to take different buses from different companies.
5. Connectivity and integration: how can different modes of transport can be linked up to suit people's needs and encourage behaviour change. E.g. how active travel modes such as walking and cycling are connected to rail and bus and how rail and bus are connected to each other.
6. Technology and data: how can technology and data be used to improve ease of use and reliability/trust in network?
7. Safety and prevalence of existing and future cycling/walking infrastructure.
8. Place: different approaches in suburban, inner city and rural areas?
9. Communication and messaging: How are we identifying and reaching unlikely transport users? E.g. sometimes green focused messaging does not resonate with certain groups who may respond better to financial incentives – and vice versa.

### **Freight:**

Canals and waterways are a strong strategic asset and an opportunity in both commercial/economic and decarbonisation, shifting transport of people and freight from roads. Areas to focus on: How do we move our freight currently? Has it been considered in current strategies and plans? What is the future role of canals?

### **Roads:**

Previously a function of the WY county council pre-1986, currently, the local authorities still act as Highway Authorities responsible for roads. Roads are too integrated and cross-border in nature at a regional level to be managed in a district focused, atomised way. There is scope to look at how roads and highway policy/management is harmonised and coordinated across the region:

1. how it works now,
2. why it wasn't changed with devolution
3. how it could work in future

Other suggestions made included:

- Sources of transport funding.
- Looking back at how the West Yorkshire+ Transport Fund has been spent, in particular on links to York.

## **Item 8 – Transport Committee Governance Review**

Members received an overview of the CA's ongoing internal review of transport governance and the Transport Committee and were invited to provide any comments or feedback to the Director of Transport Services (Dave Pearson) by 1 October 2021 if possible.

The Chair suggested that the committee look at the proposals for the future of the Transport Committee again at a future meeting once they are developed further.

**Next meeting date – 18 November 2021, venue to be confirmed**