

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 19 JANUARY 2023 AT CONFERENCE ROOM
1/2, WELLINGTON HOUSE, 40-50 WELLINGTON STREET, LEEDS, LS1
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Present:

Councillor Stan Bates	Wakefield Council
Councillor Kayleigh Brooks	Leeds City Council
Councillor Ian Cuthbertson	City of York Council
Councillor Jackie Ferguson	Wakefield Council
Councillor Caroline Firth	Bradford Council
Councillor Dot Foster	Calderdale Council
Councillor Jessica Lennox	Leeds City Council
Councillor Harry McCarthy	Kirklees Council
Councillor Amanda Parsons-Hulse (Chair)	Calderdale Council
Councillor Andrew Pinnock (Deputy Chair)	Kirklees Council
Councillor Anna Watson	Bradford Council

In attendance:

Mayor Tracy Brabin	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Noel Collings	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Haskins	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Rachel Jones	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Dave Pearson	West Yorkshire Combined Authority
Hannah Scales	West Yorkshire Combined Authority

18. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joanne Dodds, Tina Benton, Mark Thompson, Robert Finnigan and Tony Hames.

The meeting was confirmed as quorate, with 11 members present out of 11 needed for quorum.

19. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

20. Possible exclusion of the press and public

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the press and public.

21. Minutes of the last meeting held on 17 November 2022

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2022 be approved.

22. Chair's comments and update

The Committee received a verbal update from the Chair where the Chair welcomed the Mayor and reminded members of the pre-agreed topics and set out the structure of the meeting.

Resolved: That the Chair's verbal update be noted.

23. Mayor's Question Time

The Chair thanked the Mayor Tracy Brabin and officers for attending Transport Scrutiny to answer the Committee's questions. Officers present to support the Mayor included the Director of Transport Operations & Customer Experience, Director of Transport Delivery & Policy, the Head of Transport Policy, and Head of Energy and Environment Policy.

The session was split into topic areas and members would be able to ask any questions under those topic areas, and any follow ups. The topic areas were *Buses, Rail, Mass Transit, Net Zero & Decarbonisation, and Active Travel*.

Buses

- The Mayor felt she had done everything in her power to support and work with bus companies and services. Bus companies have been supported with Combined Authority money during the pandemic and since, the Mayor ran a bus driver recruitment and training programme alongside operators for 1000 new bus drivers, and future shift proofing.
- Despite this, when the government provided extra funding to companies, after mayoral lobbying, they still withdrew and cut down on routes. The main problem in her view is that bus services are run for profit and will always focus on that, rather than prioritise socially necessary routes, some of which the CA subsidise.
- Bus franchising may be a solution long term, with a goal of having a London-style bus service every 15 minutes for the whole region, but moving towards franchising requires following a very long and expensive statutory process. WYCA intends to make a decision on progressing this before the 2024 elections. The Mayor has lobbied the government to try to shorten the timescale and difficulty. Greater Manchester is still progressing the move to bus franchising 5 years later.
- The importance of accessibility was emphasised while situations where wheelchair users being set behind pushchairs on buses are still common. The Mayor's 'big bus chat' had provided a useful forum as well as 'Message the Mayor' on BBC Radio Leeds and led to some changes such as adjusting speakers at bus stops for the hearing impaired and ensuring better training for both drivers and passengers on using these services.

- There was tension between talking about the failings of the bus services and encouraging more people to use the system, as it is a challenge to persuade people to use a 'broken system'. Services are back at 80% pre-covid levels, the 'Mayor's Fares' scheme pushed it to 84% and 100% for young people. Frustration was expressed at bus companies increasing cheaper fares of £1.80 to £2 following the 'Mayor's Fares' scheme for more profit.
- There had been some improvements in the Real Time Information system, but several elements still needed work such as ensuring the correct information is submitted by bus operators as frequently as needed, to avoid the phenomenon of 'ghost buses', and to work around infrastructure schemes which have disrupted some roads and areas. Work was underway through the Enhanced Partnership to improve this.

Rail, Waterways & Freight

- The cancellation of HS2 had impacted the entire region and the Mayor hoped that despite the disappointment with HS2, the door had not closed on NPR and a through-station in Bradford could be realised in some way. Labour committed to NPR in full for which the Mayor vowed to hold them to account if they are elected. NPR would unlock £30bn worth of economic growth in the region and cannot be discounted.
- The Mayor described TransPennine Express (TPE) as not fit for purpose, her local service was 20-30% cancellations compared to the average 5%, and felt that these TPE cancellations were holding back West Yorkshire, £2m a week worth of losses, and ruining commuters lives by losing them jobs, missing funerals etc. Unlike in London, people don't have an alternative when the service is cancelled, except for very expensive taxi journeys. Despite this, TPE bosses still receive bonuses.
- The Mayor considers rail freight to be a very good way to better support the region's businesses, and carbon targets, but there is a capacity issue as freight trains currently have to share the same tracks as faster trains, leading to them slowing each other down. The country, and region's, waterways were highlighted as a possible asset in terms of freight, East-to-West trade and taking HGVs off the roads. A recent project for an inland port in Leeds was cancelled as it ran out of funding and the scope of the scheme had changed from a port to a batching facility for commercial reasons. The Committee asked for a report on freight and the waterways/port.
- The Mayor discussed the importance of guards on trains, and how helpful speaking to train staff was whilst using the service had been and agreed with the concerns that they may be taken out of service. The seeming lack of health and safety audits done by the companies with regards to overcrowding, children, and suitcases might lead to problems down the road.

Mass Transit

- Leeds is one of few major cities, and West Yorkshire is the biggest metro-region, in the world without a mass transit system. Historically, previous efforts such as the 'SuperTram' did not succeed. There appears to be a strong political will to proceed this time, and funding had been secured. The CA had recruited an interim Mass Transit

Programme Director who worked on the tram in Edinburgh and his department would expand accordingly as time progressed.

- Building mass transit will be an exceptionally lengthy process, and will take the better part of a decade, with an estimated start date of 2028. It will require long-term government backing, and the Mayor sought assurances from both major parties that they would continue to support the scheme. The process is partly long because of the number of corridors that have to be considered, and the possible effect on local areas, and ensuring that the plans have public support for the changes to their communities.
- The CA is working at pace, to go through the process, which was in the very early stages, the comprehensive consultation process, to ensure nothing is missed and full scrutiny of the process is possible. The consultation on the main vision had just been completed. The Outline Business Case Model was expected by Winter 2023 and Spring 2024.
- Mass Transit would be an opportunity to connect communities with no connections currently. It would not exist on its own, but would be directly linked to a future, franchised bus network, and different modes of travel including walking and cycling, as part of a region wide green transport network. The next step of the consultation process would be to consider possible routes and connections, drawing on lessons learned from other exercises such as 'Mayors Big Bus Chat'.
- One of the main reasons for mass transit was to have a clean and green transport system. There was a challenge in that construction would emit carbon, even if the final product would create lower emissions in the long term. There had been a global engagement exercise with suppliers to feed in ideas on how to reduce and take into account 'Scope 3' emissions during construction. This is also considered across the rest of the CA's schemes as carbon emissions are increasingly important.

Decarbonisation and Carbon Emissions

- Concerns were raised at the previous scrutiny committee meeting in November that too many of the CA's infrastructure schemes do not make any or enough of an impact in reducing carbon emissions long term, in particular road building schemes. The Mayor stated that bus routes require road building, and we need to get people on buses long term if carbon ambitions are to be reached. There is a challenge in that carbon emissions are produced by trying to shift to lower carbon alternatives e.g., road building, construction and scrapping cars.
- The analysis of carbon emissions from transport schemes is very complex because of the knock-on effects across the system and connecting areas, which effect officers' ability to monitor how well the CA is achieving. The Transport Committee received carbon impact assessed schemes during decision-making, and work is underway to support the conclusions of the recent pathways work to improve the evidence base and how the CA understands carbon emissions to better support decision making and monitoring in future.
- The Mayor felt a lot more could be done to ensure West Yorkshire was on track to deliver carbon neutrality, which is why she was eager to progress key policy areas such as infrastructure and bus services to support modal shift. She felt there had been success in other non-

transport areas, such as creating over 1000 green jobs for young people, through the green jobs task force, millions continuing to support businesses in 'greening' their processes and lowering their emissions, tens of millions in retrofitting houses. Every area of the Mayor and CA's responsibility now had a climate emergency focus across all areas, including skills and housing.

- Modal shift was key to lowering carbon emissions long term. There were some lesser-known modal shifts which could be considered further such as cars-to-motorcycles, in addition to the more common ones in cycling and walking which the CA has invested in, such as the £2 million into the Leeds City Bike scheme, soon to be seen across the West Yorkshire.

Active Travel: Cycling and Walking

- The Mayor conveyed her condolences to the family of a young woman and child who were killed recently in a tragic road accident on Scott Hall Road in Leeds. Even one road death was too many.
- The Mayor launched low traffic neighbourhoods and a 'walk to school' programme encouraging parents and children to walk to nursery and school. The Mayor emphasised the importance that roads are safe for these families to do so confidently. The safety of cyclists was also emphasised, the Mayor felt cycle lanes with a raised divide were more helpful. The Deputy Mayor for Policing, Alison Lowe, was leading on road safety called 'Vision Zero' to ensure that active travel modes are safe for all to use. Many people had not yet come to terms with the adapted highway code which puts walkers and cyclists above cars.
- Concerns were raised about the protection of cyclists during ongoing road works which disrupt cycle pathways. On one road in Calderdale the only safety measure was a simple sign asking people not to overtake cyclists. Since the bus service is low quality, more people used cars instead of risking cycling. The CA would look further into the issue of the effects of temporary works on existing active travel infrastructure.
- There was a preference for raised separation between road and cycle paths and a lot of work had already been delivered as part of the active travel agenda, with over 33km of segregated cycle ways and 45km of upgraded towpaths and 35km of greenway, 37 walk to school schemes delivered with 20 more on the way and there was more in the pipeline, with additional active travel funding recently secured to develop more.
- There was a place for transport links in planning and development schemes. There were many planning developments which did not take into account transport infrastructure, especially active travel. The Mayor considered the definition of sustainable (and affordable) housing, in her 5,000 homes target, as including transport links such as bus stops and routes, reduction in car parking, and other infrastructure as key components. Transport links were constantly promoted to developers to ensure that they are considered for future communities being built.

Resolved:

- i) That the Mayor, Director of Transport Operations, Director of Transport Policy & Delivery, Head of Energy & Environment Policy,

- and Head of Transport Policy be thanked for attending, and the Committee's feedback and conclusions be considered further.
- ii) That a report on freight, waterways and the Leeds Inland Port scheme be provided to the committee.

24. Transport Scrutiny Work Programme

The Committee discussed the Work programme for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year. The Committee confirmed the agenda for the last committee meeting of the year, on 9 March, would focus on transport consultations, transport in planning, affordable housing, and freight/waterways/inland port. The Committee also discussed and agreed a workshop, to be held on 16 February, to focus on decarbonisation, behaviour change, active travel, and modal shift.

Resolved: That the appended 2022/23 Work Programme be amended to include the agreed changes to the agenda of the 9 March 2023 committee meeting and 16 February 2023 workshop.

25. Date of the next meeting - 9 March 2023