

Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 3 September 2015

Attendance

Members of the Vibrant and Sustainable City Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Ian Angus (Chair)
Cllr Mary Bateman
Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Christopher Haynes (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lynne Moran
Cllr Caroline Siarkiewicz
Cllr Andrew Wynne

Employees

Marianne Page	Section Leader - Transportation
Earl Piggott-Smith	Scrutiny Officer
Jake Thrush	

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following members of the panel:

Cllr Keith Inston

2 **Declarations of interest**

Cllr Phillip Bateman declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan

3 **Minutes of the previous meeting (23.7.15)**

Cllr Haynes queried the comments attributed to him during the discussion on waste management and minimisation and the collection of food waste.

Cllr Haynes commented that his point was could the Council afford not to have a food waste collection service and also there was concern about waste contamination and the costs involved in separating food waste.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23.7.15, subject to the agreed changes, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 **Matters arising**

Minute 6 – ‘Rent with confidence’ campaign

Scrutiny Officer explained that a briefing paper relating to the cost against impact of the rent confidence proposals and other initiatives to improve the City’s housing offer will be sent to panel members before the end of September 2015.

Minute 7 Waste management and minimisation

Scrutiny Officer explained that the issue of food waste process has been added to the panel work programme. The item will be included in the report to be presented to a future meeting of Scrutiny Board.

Minute 8 Relocation of Wolverhampton indoor and outdoor market

Scrutiny Officer advised the panel that its comments on the layout and design of the leaflet were considered by the design group. The panel will be sent samples of the publicity material for distribution if any changes are made.

5 **West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan**

Marianne Page, Service Lead, Transport Strategy Manager, introduced the report and explained that the panel were being invited to respond to the three questions in the consultation document. Service Lead gave an overview of the background to strategy.

Jake Thrush, Transport Strategy Manager, West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) Policy & Strategy Team, gave a detailed presentation on the West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan and the groups which have been consulted informally about the proposals. Transport Strategy Manager explained the public consultation ends on 16 October 2015.

Transport Strategy Manager outlined the main points of the public consultation plan. The plan had been drafted in response to predicted growth in population and the forecast increase of an extra million journeys per day.

The importance and benefits of improved transport infrastructure network to boosting the economic performance of the West Midlands region was highlighted.

Transport Strategy Manager commented on the importance of having a vision for the future of transport that was fit for the sixth largest economy. Transport Strategy Manager explained that focus of the strategy was on making the best use of what is currently available, supported by additional public transport capacity, improved road junctions and changes to encourage walking and cycling and use of smart technologies; while recognising the challenge presented by the limited highway capacity.

Transport Strategy Manager commented on the work being done to develop performance indicators and the work done with transport colleagues in the East Midlands to look at better road and rail connections across central England.

Transport Strategy Manager discussed work being done to promote cycling and the development of a cycling charter.

Transport Strategy Manager outlined the four tiers of the overall transport system detailed in the plan:

- National/regional
- Metropolitan. For example, the development of rail and rapid transit network – a scheme is expected to be running on the Hagley Road, Birmingham in 2016.
- Local
- Intelligent/Smart mobility strategy (The Intelligent/Smart Mobility agenda is concerned with meeting traveller's needs through efficient and seamless journeys)

The plan covers a 20 year period and is likely to cost about £6.5 billion. Transport Strategy Manager commented on the high level of investment in London and

Manchester transport systems and the benefits it had brought for commuters and the economy.

The panel made the following comments and or queries about the transport plan

- The impact and benefits of HS2. The panel queried that the document did not highlight the benefits to west midlands region and the potential benefits to Wolverhampton and the extent to which the area can take advantage of the scheme. Transport Strategy Manager explained that two new stations will be built – Curzon Street and Interchange. Curzon Street which will provide a link to other areas. Transport Strategy Manager highlighted the importance of having good access to both planned stations.
- There is work being done by the Combined Authority to look at maximising the benefits of HS2 for the region and Wolverhampton. The HS2 line will provide more connections and provide rapid transport links. Wolverhampton benefits from being part of the west coast mainline which will reinforce the position of the region. The development is also expected to release capacity on the network. The panel commented on the need for people in Wolverhampton to have good access to both planned stations.
- The panel commented on vision of plan and that the document did not give a clear picture of what the service will look like. Service Lead noted the comment and explained that this is a 20 year plan to improve public transport and offer attractive alternative options across the network.
- The panel commented on the previous initiatives to encourage change away from car use such as park and ride schemes. These schemes were an important as part of a plan to discourage car use, and provide attractive transport alternatives. The panel commented on the possibility of regional car park charging strategy among the different local authorities. Transport Strategy Manager responded that most areas have short stay car parking and they try to discourage long stay. A comment was made on different levels of car usage between Stuttgart in Germany (45%) compared to West Midlands conurbation (63%). The areas have similar population size but there has been long term investment in alternatives to short car journeys.

- The panel expressed concern about the effectiveness of initiatives such as bus lanes which create bottlenecks and the extent to which the plan will find the right balance. The panel expressed concern about the use of financial penalties to discourage people who want to drive. There was also concern about whether the alternatives would be in place to provide people with a choice.

The panel discussed the need to give people different travel options. Transport Strategy Manager commented on the aim to reduce the number of average car journeys made annually and the increase in other modes of transport.

- The panel queried the governance structure of the ITA and the responsibility for delivering the plan. Transport Strategy Manager explained that the responsibilities of the ITA will be transferred to the Combined Authority.

The Combined Authority will set performance indicators and targets for air quality which link to the wider objectives detailed in the transport plan.

- The panel commented that the plan does not set out strongly the travel options available to the individual. The plan should outline the benefits of the proposal and respond to concerns about the reliability of buses.
- The panel commented that the document does not draw out the importance of offering a vision of a world class customer service and the behaviour of bus drivers in offering a friendly and welcome experience.
- The panel commented on the difficulties in getting consistent high speed Wi-Fi access on public transport and that this will need to be improved to persuade professionals to consider using this method of travel. Transport Strategy Manager accepted the importance of offering a good customer experience as part of plan to increase passenger numbers.
- The panel commented on the perception of safety on public transport, particularly in the evening and need to respond to such concerns in order to persuade people to use alternative methods of travel. The panel discussed the impact of poor behaviour on public transport on people wanting to use the services offered.
- The panel queried if the use of waterways was discussed in the plan as other cities had used canal development to support the economic regeneration and their potential to be used as a transport option. Transport Strategy Manager

responded that canals were an important part of the plan for centre's regeneration and economic development, walking and cycling, but had a more limited, niche role for the movement of freight, such as movement of materials for some construction sites. There are discussions on-going with the canal and riverside trust to develop plans to improve condition of towpaths for the benefit of cyclists and walkers. In addition, the work with Canal and River Trust is working closely with the Council to develop plans for canal side quarter.

- The panel commented on the need for the strategy to consider the specific travel needs of different groups. Transport Strategy Manager commented there is on-going work to look at the different transport needs of the public, for example responding to the increase in the number of people crossing local authority boundaries in order to get to work.
- The change in working pattern presents a challenge due to the limited capacity across the transport network to meet the predicted increased demand in the number of passenger journeys and people travelling greater distances.
- The panel commented on plans for encouraging cycle use and whether the plan was to develop dedicated cycle routes or to share the existing road network with vehicles. There was concern about the safety of using existing roads and that the benefits of cycling, particularly for short journeys was being missed. Transport Strategy Manager outlined the aims of the cycling plan and the work being done with local groups to improve existing routes and to develop a strategy. Currently 15-20% of journeys are made by cycle and this figure needs to be boosted particularly for journeys fewer than two miles. The panel discussed the benefits of dedicated cycle lanes.
- The panel queried the range of benefits outlined in the plan and the focus was on economic growth. Transport Strategy Manager accepted the importance of developing a transport network that supported economic growth and which also accommodated the expected growth in traffic numbers and deliver social and environmental benefits.
- The panel commented the plan should consider the major economic benefits of improving coach transport links. There was concern that other areas were taking advantage of the opportunity to promote their areas as coach friendly. The panel commented on the need to improve coach facilities to provide alternatives and to

follow the other example who have actively promoted day trippers and shoppers to visit.

The panel welcomed the report and accepted the recommendation.

Resolved:

That the panel's response to the questions detailed in the consultation on the proposed West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan be noted and incorporated as part of Wolverhampton City Council's formal response.