

## **BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL**

# **SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE**

**1400 hours on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Online Meeting – Actions**

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**Present:**

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

Councillors Zaker Choudhry, Eddie Freeman, Timothy Huxtable and Julie Johnson

**Also Present:**

Professor John Thornes, University of Birmingham

Azhar Quaiyoom, Network Rail

Jamie Shaw, Network Rail

Peter Sargent, Head of Rail Development, West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE)

Darshika Patel, Environment Manager, Cross Country Trains

Adrian Hugill, Head of Fleet, Cross Country Trains

Chris Light, Head of Safety, Security & Environment, Cross Country Trains

Gary Rainbow, Operations Standard Manager, Cross Country Trains

Jarrold Marsland, Regional Driver Team Manager, Cross Country Trains

Ross Shepherd, Chief Technical Officer, Beacon Rail Leasing

Mike Wills, Head of Occupational Safety, Security and Environment, West Midlands Trains

Gareth Williams, Head of Sustainability, Avanti West Coast

Craig Mortiboys, Regional Growth Manager, Avanti West Coast

David Heathfield, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chiltern Railways

Simon Jarrett, Chiltern Railways

Mark Wolstencroft, Operations Manager Environmental Protection

Ceri Saunders, Acting Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

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### **1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST**

The Chair advised those present that the meeting would be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast via the Council's Internet site and that Members of the

press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

## **2. APOLOGIES**

Councillors Olly Armstrong and Muhammad Afzal. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Freeman.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None.

## **4. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE ACTION NOTES**

The action notes of the meeting held on the 16<sup>th</sup> December were agreed with one amendment and that was to record in today's notes Cllr Johnson's apology for the meeting that was submitted in advance however the Chair did not see the text message until after the meeting was held.

## **5. CLEAN AIR DISCUSSION**

(See Item No.5)

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and outlined the purpose and background to the discussion.

Professor John Thornes & Azhar Quaiyoom talked through their respective presentations included in the agenda pack. Following queries and discussion with members the following points were made: -

- The air quality outside New Street station is being affected by the pollution inside the station being pushed out (by some of the measures being put in place) and the effect that this is having on the NO2 levels and citizens health and the impact on the Clean Air Zone (CAZ).
- Would be beneficial to communicate to station users some of the work being done to improve air quality and reduce pollution in the station. Network Rail is exploring options to further improve the mitigations already in place to reduce air pollution by utilising new technologies and will be looking at what it can do to communicate it's work through information boards at the station.
- In regard to the data presented from the University of Birmingham on NO2 levels and the impact on citizens there is a requirement to look at holistic measures to improve the air quality across the city and include the impact that pollution from trains has. There are key differences in the data shared in that more trains coming into the station have been converted from being diesel run to electric (from the previous monitoring) and noting that the impact of other measures aside from what Network Rail have put in place within the station to

reduce pollution levels. However, the infrastructure at Moor St and Snow Hill stations currently allows for diesel only trains and this has a wider impact on pollution levels in the city.

- It was acknowledged that factors such as rolling stock, seasonality and the weather does have impact on air quality and pollution levels. The CAZ is due to come into operation in June 2021 and pollution created by city centre stations needs to be monitored as part of its work to achieve cleaner air across the city.

Peter Sargant, WMRE brought forward the key points from his presentation and in discussion with members the following points were noted: -

- A study is planned for the proposal of electrification of lines at Snow Hill and will start with the full route of Kidderminster to Stratford upon Avon with an option to extend this to Worcester in the future.
- The effect of other city centre stations (Snow Hill and Moor Street) that operate diesel only trains and the wider effect on the CAZ of all pollutants being pushed into the atmosphere and the effect of this on all those that live and work in the city centre.
- The CAZ was designed specifically with roadside emissions in mind however concerns raised today can be taken up with the CAZ team for a detailed response.

Following presentations from the Train Operators the following points were made in response to issues raised by members: -

- In terms of electrification of the Chiltern line it was confirmed that the priority is to tackle poor air quality first and foremost and Chiltern Railways will be working with the government on the issue of electrification however there a sequence of projects that need to be put in place to meet this challenge and a discussion is needed with the Department for Transport (DfT). However Chiltern will continue to do it's best to tackle the issue of air pollution (including retrofitting where needed and agreed) to improve the lives of customers, colleagues and those residing in close proximity to railway lines.
- It was also highlighted that the electrification of lines at Snow Hill in the near future is very low as the study work needs to take place first and is not expected before the 2030s at the earliest.
- Westminster Council run a #dontbeidle campaign and it would be useful to have something similar in Birmingham such as a pledge that all operators can sign up to and this will be taken up by the operators through the Rail Standards and Safety Board (RSSB) and the Rail Environment Forum.
- In respect to switching-off of engines to avoid idling this is dependent on factors such as dwell time and where this is not operationally restrictive to do so. Those operators with longer dwell times were able to confirm that drivers are encouraged to switch off upon arrival at the station. It was stated however that trains are started up approximately 10 minutes in advance of passengers boarding to allow for a number of factors such as sufficient air to brake release and also for the comfort and welcoming of customers (e.g. air conditioning that takes a while to reach the correct levels).

- Hydrogen technology is still at the research stage at this point in time and there are constraints in its meaningful deployment into rail such as the number of times trains would need to stop to refuel and in its production.

The Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and confirmed that the committee would continue to track and discuss issues relating to cleaner air.

**RESOLVED: -**

1. The Chair agreed to write to Stephen Arnold, Head of CAZ on behalf of the committee regarding the implications on the CAZ of pollutants from city centre stations and the impact on clean air levels in the city.

**6. FEEDBACK FROM THE AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN CONSULTATION AND DISCUSSION ON TACKLING AIR POLLUTION ACROSS THE CITY IN RELATION TO A FUTURE CLEAN AIR STRATEGY**

Mark Wolstencroft, Operations Manager Environmental Protection provided feedback from the consultation on the Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) and the proposed future Clear Air Strategy (CAS) and made the following points: -

- The AQAP consultation ran from September to November 2020. It set out the actions within the plan that the City Council are proposing to take to achieve compliance with the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide. The focus of the AQAP is to support delivery of the CAZ to improve air quality within the city centre. It is also looking to set out an intelligence led approach for setting air quality and relevant exposure in areas outside of the city centre in various wards moving away from the city centre.
- There was a good response to the consultation. In total 65 responses were received including 7 from organisations and 58 from individuals and these were broadly supportive with the proposed plan. 35% approved of the plan and a further 33% partly approved. Many suggestions were received regarding improvements or additions to the plan however many of these fell outside of the scope of the plan in that they were not related to compliance with the nitrogen dioxide air quality objective.
- There is no intention to significantly change the proposals contained within the plan following the responses to the consultation.
- One of the suggestions received that will be built in to the plan is the need for the Council to undertake more collaborative working for example with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) and the Universities and this will also be added into other complementary work streams such as the developing clean air strategy.
- As part of the consultation an opportunity was taken to gather public opinion on whether citizens would be in favour of adverts and signage to discourage vehicle idling with 79% of responses supportive of this. Although this was outside of the scope of the AQAP it will be used for the purposes of the developing the CAS.
- A post consultation document is being finalised focusing on progressing of the AQAP and is due to be presented to the Cabinet Member in mid-February.

- The CAS has undergone internal and external consultation and a final draft is being finalised.
- From the public consultation, the CAS has been amended to include a pledge aimed at safeguarding the most vulnerable and engaging with all aspects of the local community.
- The internal consultation feedback showed considerable support that the CAS brings together common policy threads with regards to air quality, in particular, linking into the CAZ and also work done by colleagues in highways, planning and also development in general.
- Priorities identified will focus on how the Council can reduce emissions at source either through fleet improvements or for instance reducing the number of vehicles on the road, such as incentivising, model shift. The priorities also seek to both reduce emissions and exposure to air pollution through the provision of information and also to empower behavioural change.
- 6 pledges are currently being considered
  - Collaboration – working with internal and external partners;
  - Clean air for schools – promoting cleaner air around schools that includes existing programmes (i.e. school streets) and new ones being developed;
  - Inclusivity and protecting the vulnerable - engaging various communities affected by multiple factors in relation to air pollution;
  - Planning for the future – how planning and highways service areas can strategically incorporate pollution reduction into their policies;
  - Delivering the CAZ; and
  - Measuring progress - how the Council monitors and reports to the public.
- A final post consultation version is currently being finalised and it is anticipated to be presented to the Cabinet Member for approval in the first quarter of 2021.

In discussion with members the following points were made: -

- Reducing air pollution to improve the health of residents is the key objective and residents are not concerned about its source (e.g. if it is road or rail produced). The city can learn from others such as Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea councils about the good work in relation to clean air in the vicinity of rail stations. However; the focus needs to be as a city on clean air and a distinction is not needed as part of a CAZ. Work needs to be done to try and persuade the train operating companies and station owners to introduce faster measures to rid the city of the pollution being generated by trains.
- The CAS allows the city to pick up wider issues outside of legislation provided there is sufficient direction and resources to do so.

**RESOLVED: -**

1. A future update on CAS will be scheduled accordingly and include information with regard to engagement with schools.

**7. WORK PROGRAMME**

(See Item No. 7)

The Chair outlined items for future meetings including an update on the Highway Management and Maintenance PFI to be scheduled.

It is anticipated that the Committee will carry out an in-depth piece of work looking at the implementation of the climate change action plan during the next municipal year.

**RESOLVED: -**

1. Report was noted.

**8. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS (IF ANY)**

None.

**9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**10. AUTHORITY TO CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS**

Agreed.

**RESOLVED: -**

That in an urgent situation between meetings the Chair, jointly with the relevant Chief Officer, has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

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The meeting ended at 15:59 hours.