

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

**1400 hours on 16th March, Council House Extension, Margaret Street –
Actions**

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

Councillors Timothy Huxtable, Julie Johnson-White and Mike Leddy.

Also Present:

Adam Tranter, WM Cycling and Walking Commissioner

Honorary Alderman Tony Kennedy

Baseema Begum, Scrutiny Officer

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 Youtube site and that Members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Cllr Eddie Freeman joined the meeting virtually and submitted his apologies for being unable to join the meeting in-person.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Standing declarations noted. Cllr Huxtable stated a declaration for his involvement with the Friends of Trittiford Park.

4. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE ACTION NOTES

The action notes of the meeting held on 16th February were agreed.

5. WEST MIDLANDS LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN (LTP) 5 CORE STRATEGY CONSULTATION

(See Item No.5)

The Chair introduced the item and welcomed David Harris, Transport Strategy and Place Manager, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) who joined the meeting virtually. Adam Tranter, West Midlands Cycling and Walking Commissioner was also in attendance for this item.

Adam Tranter began by outlining his role and the aims and objectives of the strategy and in doing so made the following points: -

- Appointed in December by the West Midlands Mayor and is the first Cycling and Walking Commissioner for the region.
- There is a significant opportunity to improve the cycling and walking offer through accessing active travel funding especially with peoples travelling purpose and habits changing in the last couple of years post pandemic.
- With 25% of car journeys made under 1 mile in Birmingham and 41% of trips in the West Midlands region under 2 miles it is an opportunity to offer alternatives and enable people to walk and cycle more especially for short journeys.
- Cars are useful but not always the best tool for the job and the role of the Cycling and Walking Commissioner is to help facilitate and enable other modes of travel. Feedback from motorists and residents is that they do not feel safe to cycle or walk so it is crucial that infrastructure is put in place to encourage and enable more people to do so.
- Historically the focus has been on putting in place 'soft' measures and this hasn't had the impact on changing travel behaviour. Transformational infrastructure is needed to make a difference to meet collective targets and offer people a choice of ways to travel.
- The West Midlands Mayor has asked for this work to be accelerated and to focus on delivery and working with the government to do so.
- Active Travel England (ATE) is the government's executive agency responsible for improving the standards of cycling and walking infrastructure in England and has been recently formed. ATE is keeping a close eye on what is being proposed by local authorities and regions and is working with them to ensure that the infrastructure being built is of good quality including blue routes. This also affects the funding given.

David Harris outlined the key points from his presentation and during the discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the following were among the main points raised: -

- The Core Strategy sets out a set of principles that will be taken forward based on the outcomes of the consultation to understand citizens priorities and needs.
- There is public support for the reduction in car use and it is up to local politicians to take forward and articulate this.

- Public transport is seen as unreliable, with areas of the city well served in terms of bus service and some not. A similar service needs to be provided in each area so that trust is built. This is a key issue facing those that want to encourage behaviour change. It is important that this is addressed so people using other methods of travel such as a car as their first preference are aware that they will be served by a regular and reliable bus service.
- Safety is key when encouraging people to walk and cycle in certain areas. Lighting and CCTV would help make people feel safe however it is recognised that funding needs to be secured to provide these facilities.
- The poor state of parts of the public highway was noted and the maintenance of the road network was highlighted as being detrimental in encouraging more people to cycle. It was added that regular maintenance needs to be built into any transport schemes otherwise people will revert to their preferred method of travel. However, government funding has traditionally been focussed on capital expenditure. During the pandemic, the government were keen to provide funding quickly to install schemes. This led to consultation taking place after pilot schemes were put in place. A lot of learning has taken place post-pandemic.
- It is imperative to build on the good work in relation to transport schemes that were installed during the pandemic. However more work needs to be done to engage and communicate the ideas and benefits to residents and businesses so that there is buy-in and ownership of decisions that affect local communities and areas. As part of this data needs to be shared with people and this is a work in progress.
- Reliability of all modes of public transport is important and engagement with the community is key. Active travel modes such as walking and cycling need to be made safe and convenient.
- A target to increase cycling by 700% by 2041 in the region is a huge task to meet set carbon targets. DfT data shows that if nothing is done even with the move to electric cars there is still the need to address air pollution otherwise traffic will increase meaning roads becoming unusable.
- Schemes such as 'Low Traffic Neighbourhoods' (LTNs) have been piloted in parts of the city however they are not popular with all residents and have proved to be a divisive issue. It was noted that more needs to be done to promote the concept by the Council to residents and businesses in line with the city's route-to-zero ambitions.
- 'Park and Ride' at railway stations had proved extremely popular pre-covid particularly those commuting to the city centre both from inside and outside the city by train. Figures show that there has been a year-on-year increase with more people coming to the city centre by train than car. More people were using trains for commuting at peak times cutting down the number of people using cars for all of their journey.

The Chair thanked all attendees and stated that the issues raised will continue to be monitored and investigated further in the new municipal year.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.

6. CLEAN AIR ZONE (CAZ) BASELINE DATA – DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

Stephen Arnold, Head of CAZ joined the meeting virtually and gave a presentation highlighting some of the key points contained within the report of findings. During discussion with Members the following points were made: -

- The interim report is based on the first 6 months of data collected. Air quality data is collected and annualised for 12 months.
- Changes with compliance are noted within the vehicle fleet and this is broken down by category. Data included in the original modelling is what the expected level of compliance would be if a 'do nothing' scenario was followed and the impact of that on meeting the legal level set for Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).
- The volume of unique vehicles is within a tight window of between 94-105k unique vehicles per day since the beginning of the scheme. Seasonal variations and the impact of the WFH government directive that took effect on 13th December are noted.
- Currently traffic is at 95% of pre-covid levels. This increases to 99% of pre-covid levels at weekends.
- There has been no significant increase of traffic along the ring road and no significant displacement of traffic to the ring-road shown in the graphs.
- There are in excess of 90 monitoring points across the city centre. This doesn't include indicative sensors as these are not accredited by DEFRA to ensure consistency.
- A 13% reduction in the levels of NO₂ for the period 2019-21 (2019 baseline was used as the last normal year).
- 7 monitoring locations in the CAZ (out of 37) have exceedances of legal levels of NO₂ as shown in the column for 2021. This is lower than the figure for 2019. For those locations outside of the CAZ they were generally lower in NO₂ and have reduced further. The CAZ area encompasses the largest numbers of exceedance. It is worth noting however that although this is encouraging the comparison in percentage averages is not identical and caution should be taken to not read too much into it at this stage as the primary role of the CAZ was to accelerate levels of NO₂ in the shortest period of time.
- A number of policy levers and other plans are in place such as the Birmingham Transport Plan (BTP) to ensure that air pollution is tackled and the ambition to achieve cleaner air outside of the CAZ initiative continues into the future.
- Members expressed their gratitude to Stephen Arnold for his personal involvement in clarifying and providing answers in relation to CAZ related casework received by members.

The Chair thanked Stephen Arnold for his attendance and noted that a future update would be welcome.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.

7. TRANSPORTATION & HIGHWAYS CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2022/23 TO 2027/28

Phil Edwards, Assistant Director, Transport & Connectivity and Rachel Telfer, Transport Planning & Investment Manager joined the meeting virtually to discuss and answer questions on the report to be presented to the Cabinet meeting on 22nd March.

During discussion it was clarified that: -

- The Transport & Highways Annual Capital Programme is a 6-year rolling programme with a value of just over £331m and a sum of just under £94m is allocated for the first year (2022/23).
- The programme sets out how the allocated government funding (an estimated £6.225m) to deliver the local transport plan will be spent. This will be in line with the key priorities of the Council Plan.
- The BTP was adopted in October 2021 and work is underway on the delivery of schemes using the capital programme funding. Further detail can be found on individual schemes in the appendix.
- A lower portion of funding is shown as allocated against public transport schemes and this is because these schemes are delivered and financed by the partners responsible for those such as TfWM. The Council works closely with all partners on public transport schemes.
- Major investment in cycling infrastructure and all forms of active travel in the city are in tune with the BTP and the regional Local Transport Plan by TfWM.
- The former High St corridor on the A38 Bristol Road is being designed to accommodate segregated cycling and bus priority within the local centre. Further information relating to wards affected can be discussed offline.
- Schemes being delivered in the 6-year capital programme support the transition that was talked about earlier as part of the Regional Transport Plan.
- Members welcomed bus priority and the bus cross city routes being restored.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.

8. FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

(See Item No. 8)

Hannah Hogan, Flood Risk Manager joined the meeting virtually and Honorary Alderman Tony Kennedy, Advisor to the Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment on Flooding issues attended in person to discuss the report and presentation circulated as part of the agenda papers.

Hannah Hogan highlighted the key points in the presentation and during discussion with Members the following points to queries and comments were made: -

- With the move to in-person meetings Honorary Alderman suggested that a marketplace event could take place on the day of City Council to help new Councillors understand the work of the team that deals with flooding issues.

- In relation to progress made with respect to a strategy on the River Cole it was confirmed that the Council and Environment Agency (EA) are working on a solution for flood alleviation work however there is a significant funding gap to install a capital scheme. The EA are due to do some modelling work to see if something more can be done to feed into a business case.
- The Council is working with businesses and residents to secure a scheme funded through the EA's 6-year delivery programme in relation to the flooding defence work. It is anticipated that more information will be forthcoming in April in relation to funding terms. Other funding streams made available by local or central government that can be utilised for flooded communities is also being investigated. Furthermore, the team will work with colleagues in Housing regarding properties in Brookwood Avenue on funding for flood defence work.
- Members reiterated their thanks to Hannah Hogan for her help and support with casework in their respective wards during the last year.

The Chair thanked the attendees for their input.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.
2. Hannah Hogan to provide Cllr Huxtable with further information in relation to replacement works for trees.
3. Cllr Huxtable to separately email details of Brookwood Avenue in his ward to Hannah Hogan.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See Item No. 9)

As this was the last meeting of the current municipal year the Chair thanked Members for their support and input. An additional meeting has been planned for 18th May.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.

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

None.

11. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

12. 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.

The meeting ended at 16:12 hours.