

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

1000 hours on 13th December 2018, Committee Room 6 – Actions

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

Councillors David Barrie, Zaker Choudhry, Kath Hartley, Josh Jones, Chaman Lal, Hendrina Quinnen and Timothy Huxtable.

Also Present:

Councillor Waseem Zaffar, Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment

Kevin Hicks, Assistant Director, Highways & Infrastructure, Birmingham City Council

Professor John Thornes, University of Birmingham

Craig Stenning, Network Rail

Azhar Quaiyoom, Network Rail

Simon Evans, Network Rail

Richard Morris, Head of Fleet & Engineering, Cross Country Trains

Mark Wolstencroft, Operations Manager, Environmental Protection, Birmingham City Council

Steve Wright, Chair, Rail Future West Midlands

Tony Woodward, Stakeholder Liaison Officer, Campaign for Rail

Linda McCord, Senior Stakeholder Manager, Transport Focus

Jan Chaudhry-van der Velde, Managing Director, West Midlands Trains

Francis Thomas, Head of Corporate Affairs, West Midlands Trains

Richard Brooks, Customer Experience Director, West Midlands Trains

Fay Easton, Head of Stakeholder & Community Engagement, West Midlands Trains

Amanda Hines, Route Director, Virgin Trains

Richard Stanton, Head of Communications, Virgin Trains

Malcolm Holmes, Executive Director (WMRE) & Director of Rail (TfWM)

Simon Statham, Head of Technical Programmes, Midlands Connect

John Myatt, Capital Programmes and Partnerships Manager, Birmingham City Council

Honorary Alderman Stewart Stacey

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

2. APOLOGIES

An apology for lateness was submitted on behalf of Cllr Kath Hartley.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Cllr Lal declared that he is a cabinet advisor to the Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment, Cllr Waseem Zaffar.

4. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S ACTION NOTES

The action notes of 8th November 2018 were noted.

5. BUDGET CONSULTATION

(See document No.1)

Cllr Waseem Zaffar outlined the key proposals that fall within his portfolio as set out in the budget consultation document. There are 4 particular budget lines of relevance as follows:-

1. A £100k saving to be made within the Transportation and Connectivity team that relates to a recent staffing restructure equating to a reduction on staffing costs with four teams being pulled together.
2. Dimming and trimming of street lighting on the public highway. It is anticipated that a saving of £150k will be made each year until 2023. The proposal was to slightly change the time that street lighting comes on and turns off by 5 minutes. In addition lighting levels between midnight and 5am would also be reduced. There would be an energy saving however residential and visitor safety remains of paramount importance and this will be taken into account. The City Council is working with neighbourhoods and the Police on safety concerns. Kevin Hicks, Assistant Director, Highways & Infrastructure clarified that each area will have an assessment done in regards to crime and safety in line with the national code of practice that all local authorities must carry out.

3. The third proposal was a restructure of the Local Engineering service with a saving of £100k. The Cabinet Member has written to local members on this issue outlining the need to strengthen the role to work with residents, local Members, businesses and communities on highways and transport matters. The focus is on re-prioritising the work that local engineers do and staff will be put on permanent contracts therefore getting rid of costs relating to consultancy services.
4. The final proposal was on civil parking enforcements with changes to parking tariffs. Additional income generated will be invested into transport activities and the employment of more civil enforcement officers in local areas.

During discussion with Members the following points were made:-

- There was concern about the increase in parking charges adversely affecting drivers living in areas where there are controlled parking zones (CPZs) within the area marked for the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) resulting in them being charged twice. There was also additional concern about drivers having to pay for an increase in on-street parking in local centres and the negative effect on businesses.
- The Cabinet Member, Cllr Zaffar clarified that the increase in parking charges was specifically targeted at the city centre only and this was to reduce the number of vehicles parking in the city centre and to encourage people to use sustainable modes of travel. He added that this was in-line with City Council's policies in tackling air pollution and congestion and that additional income raised would be re-invested in transport activities. Cllr Zaffar added that CPZs were part of the submission to government for funding from the Clean Air Fund to put in place exemptions and mitigation measures for those living in the CAZ.
- The issue of withdrawing funding from school crossing patrols in high risk areas where there are no pedestrian controlled lights (PL105) was raised by Cllr Huxtable. The concern was that with no crossing wardens funded by the Council where would the funding come from within the Cabinet Member's budget to invest in capital measures such as pelican crossings to ensure the safety of children and other road users. In response it was clarified that this budget line was not within Cllr Zaffar's portfolio however capital funding can come from a variety of sources and this would be identified once the budget consultation has ended. The Cabinet Member stated that he would take this response back as part of feedback to the consultation.

RESOLVED:-

1. The report was noted.

6. SESSION ON RAIL WITH PARTNERS

(See document pack No.2)

The Chair, Cllr Clements outlined the purpose of the session was to look at rail issues facing the region and the city including building on the work of the Health and Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee that had completed a report on the effect of

air pollution on health. Presentations contained within the pack were noted and speakers were asked to draw out the main points.

Professor John Thornes, University of Birmingham gave an outline of the new legislative changes and the current legislation relating to the exposure to hazardous substances for staff and passengers and in respect of air pollution at Birmingham New Street station. Following this an interlinked presentation was given by Azhar Quaiyoom on the work that Network Rail has done with regards to putting in interventions to improve air quality at New Street station. This included the progress made on the Air Quality Action Plan that was developed following the work by the University of Birmingham in January 2017. There have been improvements seen since January 2018 and Network Rail will continue to monitor air quality levels and hold regular focus groups working with train operators.

During discussion with members the following key points were made:

- It was clarified that wider issues relating to 'clean air' such as particulate matter caused by rail stations will be picked up as part of the update to the Clean Air Quality Strategy. The City Council is working with Network Rail and partners on this. The Chair stated that the Committee will be checking back on this work in the new year.
- Real benefits to health will emerge when electrification of trains takes place across the country or the invention of new technology.
- Cross Country trains have the largest fleet of voyager trains going into New Street station and are dealing with two key issues in helping to improve air quality. Firstly work on the auto-shut down modification with Bombardier (builder and maintainer of the trains) to see if a solution on reducing idling time can be found that will not adversely impact reliability. However these trains are 20 years old and therefore finding a solution will take some effort and time. The second issue is longer term and involves looking at new options including the use of batteries for the first and last mile of journeys going into and leaving New Street station.
- The Government has authority over train operators and in particular with reference to the cross country franchise as all technical issues are specified in the franchise. It was suggested that the Committee could write to the Government on these points.
- The future could see diesel trains coming into New Street station as part of the work on the Midlands Rail Hub and this will provide another challenge to Network Rail.
- Platforms 10 and 11 at the station have the ability to cater for electric trains however not all trains that use these platforms have the capacity to use electrification. In this case hybrid trains could be considered as they would be able to use electrification where there is existing infrastructure and so very little cost is involved with the added benefit to the air quality.

Jan Chaudhry van-der Velde, West Midlands Trains talked to his presentation highlighting specifically the investment and timeline in improving customer journeys in Birmingham and the wider Midlands region. Challenges in infrastructure and the

postponement in implementing the Winter 2018 timetable were noted as well as the work on improving accessibility for all rail users. Future ambitions addressing capacity and travel pattern issues were also discussed.

In response to a query about informing passengers of the delay in launching the proposed new timetable (originally scheduled for December 2018) it was confirmed that West Midlands Trains were informed of the delay by Government on 9th July so at this point a high level publicity campaign that would normally take place informing customers of the changes had not started. However there are plans to deploy this in the new year with a stakeholder campaign with interest groups and at train stations.

Cllr Quinnen raised the issue of helping people access train stations better. This included the design of stations for those who may have a disability, bike or buggy but also help with technology for those who may not be so I.T. savvy. Francis Thomas, West Midlands Trains confirmed that a number of initiatives and improvements are underway and that further information on travel confidence and accessibility will be provided.

Amanda Hines, Virgin Trains gave a short presentation explaining that Virgin Trains had operated the West Coast line for 21 years and in that time passenger numbers have trebled. The service has continued to grow year on year and is expected to reach full capacity by 2026. In terms of managing the capacity several improvements had been made including scrapping peak time restrictions at Euston station and strengthening sets that serve the West Midlands. Virgin Trains have also introduced environmental improvements aimed at reducing carbon at stations, driver training in low emissions driving and are part of a partnership alliance with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) looking at sustainable travel.

Rail Focus groups representing the views of passengers joined the discussion and made the following points:-

- The biggest priority for passengers is value for money as highlighted in responses given to the national rail passenger survey undertaken twice a year.
- Ticket prices and season tickets need to be flexible with the changing culture of the 9-5 working day. Offering real choices to people to use public transport includes the need to offer more options outside of the peak travel hours. This includes working with other partners including bus companies to give passengers a 'door to door' experience.
- Concerns about poor frequency of trains on some lines meaning that using the train is less of an option.

Cllr Huxtable raised the issue of revenue protection and introducing gate lines at all stations in the city centre from the first train to the last train and highlighted the different revenue protection policies of train operators resulting in a loss of income. There was a need to be consistent and for train operators to come together and ensure that the policy is the same across the stations and that money generated is put back into the system.

Malcolm Holmes, WMRE/TfWM talked to his presentation 'Delivering a Rail Revolution for Communities'. He highlighted in particular:-

- The makeup of the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) as a partnership of 16 local authorities and clarified that this includes shire and unitary authorities who all have voting rights. TfWM and the West Midlands Combined Authority are part of this. The Board of Directors is made up of elected members of all the local authorities of which Birmingham City Council has two members.
- WMRE has a 'strategic focus' and works with train operators and partners across the region on the various delivery elements within this.
- That the WMRE will be providing a written submission to the independent review of the rail industry that was launched by Government in September 2018. The review is wide in scope and includes a fundamental look at the structure of the rail industry in the UK, the need to balance private and public sector involvement and to develop a better fare system. A report of the findings is due to be published in 2019 and there is an expectation that changes in law will follow. WMRE is keen to voice that there is a bespoke package for the West Midlands with adequate devolution to carry out the changes and improvements needed.

Simon Statham, explained the role of Midlands Connect in bringing together the East and West Midlands to improve the functional and geographical economy. The Midlands Rail Hub plan set out the key objective in targeting and improving links between the key cities in the region. This includes recognising the most valuable routes for the economy and working out how to distribute additional trains. Faster trains (without an adverse effect on local journeys) are also high on the agenda and Midlands Connect are working with Network Rail and the Department for Transport on a strategy to make this happen. Other issues to note include the benefit of HS2 to other areas outside of the direct line and providing additional freight paths to take lorries off the road meaning less pollution, a positive impact on health and congestion.

John Myatt, Birmingham City Council added that the City Council is working with partners within the governance process to meet City Council objectives and support inclusive growth.

RESOLVED:-

1. Letter to be written to the Secretary of State for Transport with regards to ensuring adequate technical specification is detailed in the new cross country franchise for train operators in relation to time spent by trains idling.
2. Members requested further information from West Midlands Trains on passenger accessibility to stations both physical measures and help for people in accessing technology.

7. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee's work programme was noted and the Chair, Cllr Clements reminded Members of a visit to the Clean Kilo supermarket as part of the work on the Plastic Free Birmingham Inquiry. The visit will be held in January and suggested dates will be circulated.

Following on from the last meeting when it was highlighted that Members may wish to visit Transport for West Midlands. Members agreed to undertaking a visit in January.

8. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Noted.

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

None.

10. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

11. 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 12:35 hours.