

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

1400 hours on 7th July 2021, Online Meeting – Actions

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

Councillors Mick Brown, Timothy Huxtable, Zaker Choudhry

Also Present:

Councillor Waseem Zaffar

Philip Edwards, Assistant Director, Transport & Connectivity

Ceri Saunders, Acting Group Overview & Scrutiny Manager

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

The Chair noted that some Councillors were not physically present due to continued concerns relating to Covid-19 but were dialling in from home on this occasion.

3. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE AND CHAIR

Noted.

4. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIR

Councillor Julie Johnson was confirmed as Deputy Chair.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Standing declarations noted.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee's Terms of Reference as listed in the Council constitution were noted.

7. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE ACTION NOTES

The action notes of the meeting held on the 17th March were agreed.

8. CABINET MEMBER FOR TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT - ANNUAL REPORT AND PRIORITIES

(See Item No.8)

The Chair welcomed Councillor Waseem Zaffar and Phil Edwards, Assistant Director, Transport & Connectivity who talked through the presentation circulated and made the following points: -

- Clean Air Zone (CAZ) air quality (AQ) data will be shared with Members following the introduction of the CAZ and going forward this will be done on a monthly basis.
- Engagement for Tranche 2 of the Active Travel Fund (ATF) will be improved.
- 4 bids have been submitted as part of the Levelling Up Fund (LUP).
- In consultation with residents and businesses and following feedback received improvements are being made to the Kings Heath Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN). Further 'Places for People' schemes in other wards are being constructed in consultation with the community and local stakeholders.
- A backbench group of Councillors chaired by Councillor Fred Grindrod has been formed on the use of E-Scooters. The group meet for the first time today to pick up concerns and issues raised by residents, Councillors and other stakeholders.
- There are currently 12 car-free school street schemes and it is anticipated that this will be extended to double the number over the summer period.
- Highway works on the A34 Perry Barr underpass continue with a weekend closure planned for 15 & 16 July. This will be a challenge, but the focus is on completing key work over a single weekend and to keep disruption to a minimum by communicating as widely as possible in advance of the works commencing. It is anticipated that by the autumn traffic flow will have improved until completion of the works in the new year. A sum of £1m has been spent on traffic management to aid traffic flow in the area.

- Private briefings on the Highways Management and Maintenance PFI contract have been provided and open to all councillors and it is hoped that this will enable local Members to advise residents. A backbench group of Councillors has also been formed to look at issues and concerns raised.

Following the presentation, a discussion was held with Members and the following points were made in response to queries raised: -

- In recognition of the Council's commitment to tackle climate change and the requirement for senior leadership to take this work forward the post of an Assistant Director is due to be appointed shortly.
- Recognise that there has been slowness in getting the River Cole partnership set up in respect of having set flood defences that also provide added benefits such as the positive effect on biodiversity, air quality and the local environment. A detailed response will be provided on this however due to staffing shortages in the last few years this has impacted some of the work around flood defence measures that the city has been looking to implement.
- Metro works continue and as noted in the extensions progressed to Westside and Eastside during the pandemic. The additional work on the track realignment on Corporation Street has been necessary and the impact of further disruption on businesses has been noted and discussions have taken place with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) on this. There are funding issues related to the extension of the Metro through the Smithfield development however there is a commitment to protect this travel corridor through the planning process to put in the necessary provision for any future works and ensure that future costs are mitigated.
- Revenue generated from the CAZ will be used to support public transport options and to promote options to increase clean air and reduce air pollution across the city so that safe levels can be met. Funding for ward initiatives is still a priority within this and will be based on the data received.
- Data and reports on AQ and real time statistics have been collated and will be available shortly as sources of data are held by different partners and will need to be brought together for the baseline report. An annual status report on the AQ position will be reported back formally.
- The benefit of trees on the environment and well-being is noted and there is the ambition to increase tree canopy in every ward but particularly those with lower coverage. Planting more trees does have an impact on leaf fall during the autumn months and is a concern for residents where due to budget savings street cleansing has not been as frequent.
- Where trees are removed or replaced then an assessment is undertaken to place new trees at the nearest location. Replacements are made on a like for like basis.
- 20mph zones and traffic measures aimed at ensuring drivers reduce speed around schools is of interest as the city looks to bring further schools on board as part of future phases of the Car-Free School Streets scheme. This can be explored further with Members interested in schemes in their wards.

- The refresh of the Local Transport Plan by the WMCA will pick up the issues in relation to the future and long-term vision for public transport including train (and stations), bus and other modes of transport. It is due to go out to public consultation and will pick up the key issues of importance to residents, businesses and other stakeholders.
- The Council is working with partners on the WMCA Bus Alliance and Chair of the WMCA Transport Delivery Committee, Cllr Hartley to tackle some of the bus related issues with operators. Current bus usage is at 66% of pre-covid levels and is increasing. There is concern that users are not wearing face masks and the reluctance of others to use the bus however work is taking place by bus operators and the WMCA Safer Travel teams to encourage bus use and for people to wear masks.
- The No. 11 bus route has been temporarily re-routed to deal with utility works in the Kings Heath LTN area. The bus operator has stated that the bus route will return to normal in the autumn. A group of Members and MPs in wards affected are part of a group that meet weekly to discuss issues to get the LTN working better for all affected parties. As a result, a number of interventions have been brought forward to improve the traffic flow in Kings Heath. It has been noted that other Members have an interest in other LTNs.
- Concerns have been raised and noted in relation to the use of VOI e-scooters and safety concerns by road users especially those with disabilities and visual impairments. A working group chaired by Cllr Cotton has been set up and a meeting has already taken place with some very good points raised that will be investigated further. The provider (VOI) are looking at a number of options to ensure that users behave considerately. VOI are also undertaking testing in Northampton that would prohibit the use of e-scooters on pavements. Additionally, there are a number of docking stations across the city and users are being encouraged to leave the e-scooters in a safe place.
- More work needs to be done on messaging so that some cyclists ensure that they ride safely and are considerate of other users on canal towpaths and around busy key locations in the city centre.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance today and expressed her gratitude to all transport workers for their hard work in keeping the city moving during the current pandemic.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.
2. Cllr Zaffar to provide Cllr Huxtable with an update on the work happening in relation to the River Cole partnership.
3. Cllr Zaffar to confirm the availability of AQ monitoring data, the traffic baseline study and CAZ monthly factsheets and when these will be available for access by Members.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(See Item No. 9)

Cllr Huxtable raised the issue previously discussed on considering the importance of the transport and environment aspects of urban regeneration frameworks. This is in particular reference to ensuring that traffic flow is improved through the designing of traffic schemes for local centres that bring about improved environmental and active travel benefits including the public transport offer.

The Chair, Cllr Clements agreed that this could be explored further with officers ensuring that any work the committee undertakes would add benefit.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.

10. DATE OF MEETINGS 2021/22

Future meeting dates were noted.

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

None.

12. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The meeting scheduled in April will be during the purdah period so it would be beneficial to move this to May ahead of the AGM.

RESOLVED: -

1. Scrutiny Officers to re-arrange the April meeting date to May.

13. 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 15:34 hours.