

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE

1400 hours on 20th October 2021, BMI – Actions

Present:

Councillor Liz Clements (Chair)

Councillors Eddie Freeman, Timothy Huxtable and Hendrina Quinnen

Also Present:

Jonny Wiseman, Customer Experience Director, West Midlands Trains

Sophie Morris, Customer Experience Manager, West Midlands Trains

Sian Sansum, Public Affairs Manager, West Midlands Trains (online)

Sophie Allison, Commercial Director, West Midlands Metro (online)

Pete Bond, Director of Integrated Transport Services, Transport for West Midlands

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

Cllr Zaker Choudhry.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Standing declarations noted.

4. SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT O&S COMMITTEE ACTION NOTES

The action notes of the meeting held on the 7th July were agreed.

Cllr Huxtable raised an issue that he had previously raised with Simon Needle, Principal Arboriculturist and Cllr Waseem Zaffar, Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment concerning the overgrowth of hedge rows and vegetation on public footpaths. It was highlighted that the overgrowth was causing an obstruction making visibility difficult for both those walking along the pavements and motorists. Cllr Huxtable added that it was necessary that action was taken to make these footpaths safe for pedestrians and as he had previously raised the issue in various forums, he was disappointed that to date no action had taken place. A request was made through the Chair if this feedback could be provided to both officer and Cabinet Member as the City Council are encouraging people to walk and cycle more however the assets need to be maintained for people to safely do this.

RESOLVED: -

1. On behalf of the Chair the Scrutiny Officer will follow up this issue with Simon Needle and the Cabinet Member for a response.

5. RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT

(See Item No.5)

Jonny Wiseman, Customer Experience Director, West Midlands Trains and Sophie Morris, Customer Experience Manager, West Midlands Trains and Pete Bond, Director of Integrated Transport Services, Transport for West Midlands were in attendance for this item. Sian Sansum, Public Affairs Manager, West Midlands Trains and Sophie Allison, Commercial Director, West Midlands Metro also took part in the meeting virtually.

An apology was received from Ali Bell from National Express West Midlands (NXWM) as she was on leave however any questions raised will be responded to by Pete Bond, where possible. Written responses will also be provided where required.

Presentations were received from WMT, West Midlands Metro, Transport for West Midlands and on behalf of NXWM.

During the discussion, and in response to Members' questions, the following were among the main points raised: -

- Flexible season tickets produced by the rail industry covering the entire network has been offered to customers however the feedback has been that overall, it has not met customer demand or deemed to be value for money as the fares structure is very complicated.
- However, although the initial uptake was low to begin with it is increasing in the West Midlands and have been generally well received. The tickets offer flexibility to travel outside of the peak times.
- Similar to train usage for leisure purposes on the weekend the pattern for bus use shows an increase in 3-4% during the same time. The recovery of bus usage in Birmingham is lower in comparison to other strategic centres in the region as it is more office based and there are less commuters using the bus for this purpose.

- There was concern on the lack of mask wearing across various modes of public transport. There has been an increase in the number of people not wearing masks in the last 6 weeks. This has been discussed between operators however messaging encouraging users to wear masks would need to be agreed industry-wide however further guidance in this area from government is awaited.
- Some changes have been made to on-board train teams to encourage mindful behaviour in relation to mask-wearing and senior guards are also on the train to remind customers via announcements to show consideration for other passengers. Colleagues at WMT meet twice-weekly to consider issues relating to Covid-19 safety including social distancing and ventilation.
- Behaviour of passengers is considered through a survey of customers perception of safety. WMT work closely with West Midlands Police and the Safer Travel teams on this.
- In relation to making wearing a mask a condition of carriage on the Metro similar to how TfL are operating it was confirmed that although this was considered it was felt that it wasn't enforceable as there were no powers to do so and may bring issues for staff on-board in relation to anti-social behaviour. The Police were consulted on this issue and stated that as there were no powers to enforce, they would not be doing so. Additionally, dialogue with colleagues at the Manchester Metrolink where mask wearing is a condition of carriage reported that they were struggling to enforce it and it was felt therefore that for the safety of staff it would be best not to proceed with enforcing it.
- It was confirmed that the rail companies do have assimilation training that is used as part of driver training and development however more could be done industry-wide with investment in this area.
- Exceptional customer service is key to getting more people to use trains. In addition, where modern technology goes wrong it is imperative that across public transport the ability is in place to deal with any issues in a modern and pro-customer way.
- Passenger surveys have taken place to understand travel behaviour and what instigates behaviour change. Transport for West Midlands have undertaken work in this area and in relation to the factors why people are using the Metro more it highlighted that there was a number of reasons for the increase in use that could not be singled out as solely an effect of the introduction of the Clean Air Zone.
- Metro works are due to finish at the end of the month on Corporation Street meaning that the line will be reinstated up to the Library of Birmingham. Work on the extension to Edgbaston Village with a planned opening in December 2022. Further work to grow the two metro extensions is planned.
- The extension to Digbeth will be promoted and this will be a key part of the wider expansion of the Metro increasing patronage and generating more revenue. Equally the connections to HS2 and wider work in the region on

interconnectivity will yield greater economic prosperity and the Metro will play a key part of this.

- Discussion on middle door buses has been considered and routes have been discussed with bus operators. The Sprint Metro buses planned to be in operation on the A34/A45 corridors in 2023 will have middle doors.
- The re-instating of the cross-city bus was welcomed but it was noted that it was different to the previous version as it should fit in with the city's ambition for improving air quality. Likewise, its role in future connectivity with other transport networks and policy objectives was highlighted with the aim being to integrate wider transport services together.
- Acknowledgement that park and ride services were very popular pre-pandemic however the return to date in usage is relatively low compared to other modes of travel. Further work would need to be undertaken on whether these should be expanded as this would need to link into wider work on parking policy.

The Chair extended her thanks to everyone for their attendance at today's meeting and frontline workers.

RESOLVED: -

1. Sophie Allison to send a link to the report on 'Light Rail' to be shared with the committee.
2. Pete Bond to provide further information on Better Streets Community Funding Tranche 2.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

(See Item No. 6)

In discussion with Members on the future work programme Cllr Clements highlighted the report on Electric Vehicle (EV) charging that is due to be presented to Cabinet for discussion in December and the opportunity for the Committee to discuss with officers the wider approach being taken by the Council at a future meeting.

The motion on de-investment in fossil fuels agreed at City Council in 2017 was highlighted by the Chair and it is anticipated that the West Midlands Pension Fund will be able to join the Committee in a discussion in the near future.

Cllr Freeman raised the possibility of inviting Kier together with Highways officers to a future meeting to give an update on the work currently scheduled and the status of the PFI contract.

The opportunity to discuss the Birmingham Transport Plan Refresh during the consultation period was highlighted by Cllr Huxtable and the Chair agreed that this would be helpful as part of the Cabinet Member for Transport & Environment's next update to Committee.

Cllr Huxtable also raised the work taking place in relation to 'Waste to Zero' with reference to transport and environmental elements and asked if these could be picked up with the Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Parks who is scheduled to attend

the Committee's next meeting. The Chair agreed that this would be a good opportunity to raise concerns.

Furthermore, Cllr Clements re-iterated that the new Assistant Director for Climate Change has been invited to attend the next meeting to set out her priorities. It was anticipated that the Committee will delve further into the work that the Council will be undertaking in relation to the Climate Change Action Plan agreed at City Council once the team is in place to support this work and this is likely to be next year.

RESOLVED: -

1. The report was noted.

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

None.

8. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

9. 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 16:08 hours.