

SCRUTINY BOARD (DEVELOPMENT)

TUESDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 2006

PRESENT: Councillor B Cleasby in the Chair

Councillors P Davey, D Hollingsworth,
G Latty, M Lobley, A Lowe, A Ogilvie and
N Taggart

16 Declaration of Interests

The Chair declared a personal interest for Item 9 (Minute No. 21) as a Member of the Airport Consultative Committee.

17 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors R Lewis and Millard.

18 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th July 2006 be approved as a correct record.

19 Executive Board Minutes

The Chair informed Members that the Scrutiny Unit had received a request from a Leeds resident for scrutiny of the Executive Board's decision on the deputation against the sale, demolition and redevelopment of the former Blackgates School in Tingley. As this request was received after the papers for this meeting had been despatched, it was proposed to consider this item at the October meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 16th August 2006 be noted.
- (b) That the request for scrutiny of the decision of the Executive Board to go ahead with the disposal of the former Blackgates Infants School at Tingley be considered at the October meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Development) and added to the work programme.

20 Overview and Scrutiny Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3rd July 2006 be noted.

21 Presentation on the Short, Medium and Long Term Transport Strategy for the City

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report introducing a presentation to be given to Members at the meeting on the short, medium and long term transport strategy for the city. Attached to the report was information related to delivery against the first West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2001 – 2006 which highlighted key achievements in Leeds over this period.

At the meeting to make the presentation on the Leeds Transport Strategy Review was Dave Gilson, Head of Transport Policy in the Development Department and to give a presentation on Bus Services was Neil Holt, Assistant Director Transport Co-ordinator from Metro.

Also in attendance at the meeting to respond to Members' questions and participate in the discussion were Richard Harris, Assistant Director Commercial Section at First Bus, David Hoggarth, Assistant Director Transport Development at Metro and Louise Holliday, Transport Planner (Policy) from the Development Department.

Dave Gilson's PowerPoint presentation outlined in summary:

- Improvements in transport in Leeds since 1995.
- An overview of the impacts of the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2001-2006 (LTP1).
- Examples of successful actions of LTP1.
- A Forward Strategy for each area of Leeds, taking into account in particular alternatives to the unsuccessful proposals for the Supertram.
- Schemes identified in the short (2006-2008) medium (2008-2011) and long terms (2011+) for improvements to highways, rail and bus services.

Next Neil Holt gave a PowerPoint presentation on the organisation of Bus Services. The presentation included in summary:

- The implications of the 1985 and 2000 Transport Acts.
- Metro's role.
- How commercial services operate.
- Meeting social needs through tendered services and Metro's approach to these services.
- A bus strategy and future plans.

The Chair thanked the speakers and invited questions and comments from the Board. In summary the issues covered were:

- The modernisation of buses – the need for improved cleanliness, air conditioning, more spacious seating and First Bus's investment programme in new stock and new depots. These improvements would make journeys a more positive experience and encourage people to use public transport.

- Plans to improve transport connectivity in West Leeds and the justification for an outward bound High Occupancy Vehicle lane through the area rather than a bus lane.
- The proliferation of information signs.
- The use of new technology to control traffic lights and provide passengers with information on the arrival of their next bus.
- The use of data mapping to aid social inclusion by improving accessibility in particular to services such as hospitals.
- The use of modelling techniques to produce a preferred transport network.
- Quality contracts.
- The need to inform residents as to the reasons why longer bus stops are necessary on certain bus routes.
- The possibility of having bike lockers that can be booked with a train ticket in advance. Difficulties as to the availability of such lockers and problems of vandalism.
- Kirkstall Forge Station and general issues around funding contributions from developers as part of the planning consent package.
- Park and ride at railway stations and the difficulties of acquiring enough land for parking and ways to encourage travellers to use other means of transport to reach railway stations.
- The use of park and ride facilities by travellers from outside the Leeds boundary to take advantage of the Metro card.
- The reasons for the cost of new railway stations.
- The responsiveness of Metro to requests from Councillors.
- Governance arrangements in London and whether adopting a similar approach in the Leeds City Region would have a beneficial effect on transport.

The Chair thanked Officers and representatives from Metro and First Bus for attending and contributing to the discussions.

(NB: During the course of the above discussions, Councillors Hollingsworth and Taggart arrived at 10.10am and 11.25am respectively and Councillor Lowe left the meeting at 11.40am.)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report, presentations and comments above be noted.
- (b) That a printout of the PowerPoint presentations be circulated to all Members of the Board.
- (c) That details of new technologies aiding the planning and use of transport facilities including Smart cards be provided to Members, and information as to when and where these new technologies will become available.

22 Members' Questions

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report outlining the provisions contained in the Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules for Members

to ask questions of the Director who Chairs the corresponding Corporate Priority Board on a range of service issues.

Officers had been given notice of the following question: 'What were the lessons learned from the issue by default of planning consent and the subsequent reports by the Ombudsman over the Telecoms Mast on Rawdon Billing?'. Sue Wraith, Head of Planning Services in the Development Department, was in attendance to respond to this specific question from the Board.

Sue Wraith explained to the Board that this type of planning application worked on the basis that the applicant had permitted development rights unless the Council intervened within 56 days and issued a refusal notice. She explained the circumstances behind the telecommunications mast being erected apparently by default of planning consent at Rawdon Billing. In the case of Rawdon Billing she reported that the Department had received a letter from the Ombudsman's office in July 2006 saying that they were now satisfied with all the actions taken by the Council. With regard to Thompsons's Yard at Otley, enforcement investigations are being carried out with a view to enforcement action being taken.

Members were advised that procedures had been updated to minimise the risk of these situations arising again:

- the regulation number of 56 days to issue a refusal notice had been artificially reduced within the Department to 46 days,
- a system of automatic computer reminders had been put in place,
- line managers monitor and are provided with a weekly list of mast applications that would expire that week,
- these types of applications continue to be put in a red file,
- the date and time these applications are received is stamped on the envelope and the envelope retained with the documentation, if not opened on the same day,
- refusal notices are faxed as well as posted and a follow up telephone call made to ensure that the notice had been received,
- staff awareness of these procedures had been raised and this would be regularly revisited.

In response to other questions from the Board, Members were advised that not every planning permission was checked to make sure that it was being implemented correctly but that complaints from the public were responded to. Members were also informed that all letters received at the Department were screened and sent out to the appropriate officer to deal with. Sue Wraith would pass on the Board's concerns to the relevant senior managers in the Department regarding notifying Councillors of senior officers leaving or retiring from the Department.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That Members be kept informed regarding developments with the Otley telecommunication phone mast case.

- (b) That in future Members be advised at an early date when senior officers leave or retire from the department.

(NB: Councillor Lobley left at this point in the meeting at 12.10pm.)

23 Inquiry into Leeds City Region

The Chief Executive's Department submitted a report outlining some of the latest developments to the Leeds City Region and to the issue nationally. Attached to the report was a letter from the Rt Hon Ruth Kelly MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to the joint Leaders of Leeds City Council outlining a number of questions that her Department would like to see explored by September 2006.

Nicole Brock, Head of Regional Policy, Chief Executive's Department, presented the report and updated Members on the latest developments. She was accompanied by Rob Norreys, Project Manager in the Regional Policy Team also from the Chief Executive's Department.

Members were advised that a written response to the Rt Hon Ruth Kelly MP's letter would be sent on 18th September and Members would be circulated with a copy. The City Region Development Programme had also been agreed in principal and a report would be going to the Executive Board on 20th September prior to its launch in November 2006. Members were also informed that the concept of a Leeds City Region had the support of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government but not yet of others who were more in favour of stronger Regional Development Agencies co-existing.

Members expressed their support for the Leeds City Region concept and there followed general discussion on this topic, in particular on issues concerning governance and accountability. Members were advised that Leeds City Region leaders were not in favour of an elected mayor. Exploring delivery structures and more formal governance arrangements were now high on the agenda, although the name of 'Leeds City Region' had already been accepted. It was explained that other city regions were further ahead in terms of robust governance arrangements but theirs were built on existing structures, whereas it did not make sense to build the Leeds City Region on the West Yorkshire administrative region.

The Chair thanked Officers for their hard work on this fascinating project and also for their time attending and presenting reports to the Board.

(NB: Councillor Davey left the meeting at 12.15pm during the course of the above discussions.)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Board supports the city region approach as the functionally coherent unit for developing interventions aimed at achieving enhanced economic growth, particularly relating to interventions around transport

- connectivity; economic development (including innovation); skills and housing/building sustainable communities (ie places where people choose to live) where city region working can bring real added value.
- (b) That the Board endorses Leeds City Council's contribution to the broader city region partnership and to its efforts to enhance overall economic performance.
 - (c) That the Board endorses the view that other regional and national public bodies, government agencies and departments with a remit to promote economic growth, improve transport connectivity, improve skills levels etc, should seek to align their strategy and delivery plans to the city region.
 - (d) That the Board recognises that developing a city region strategy and policy in all areas will proceed at different rates dependent on the level of existing understanding, so for example transport thinking at a city region level is well advanced and moving forward, whereas a distinct city region skills offer is less well developed.
 - (e) That the response sent to the letter received from the Rt Hon Ruth Kelly MP be shared with the Board.
 - (f) That an update report be presented to the Board in a year's time or when there were significant developments particularly with regard to governance arrangements.
 - (g) That further information be provided to Members on other city regions particularly regarding their governance arrangements.

24 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report on the Board's Work Programme, together with the Forward Plan of Key Decisions pertaining to this Board's Terms of Reference covering the period 1st August 2006 to 30th November 2006, for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and Forward Plan of Key Decisions be noted.
- (b) That consideration of performance management information be added to the Board's Work Programme for November 2006.

25 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 10th October 2006 at 10.00am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30am.

The meeting concluded at 12.40pm.