

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

WEDNESDAY, 19TH JULY, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor A Marshall-Katung in the Chair

Councillors P Alderson, N Buckley,
M Foster, J Garvani, S Hamilton,
A Hussain, S Lay, M Millar, M Shahzad,
N Sharpe and I Wilson

15 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals.

16 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

17 Late Items

There were no late items.

18 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations.

19 Minutes - 28 June 2023

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

20 Matters Arising

Minute 11 – Performance Report

Affordable Homes – With regard to the annual in-year target for affordable homes and the additional requirements associated with historic under provision, a response from the Head of Strategic Planning had been circulated to Board Members.

Progress 8 Scores – The Chair had written to the Chair of the Scrutiny Board (Children & Families) regarding the Progress 8 Scores for the Leeds SEND cohort. This would be considered as part of the Scrutiny Board (Children & Families) consideration of the 3As Plan and the Chair had been invited to attend.

21 Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy Annual Update

The report of the Head of Democratic Services set out an update on progress in delivering the Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy Action Plan and set this within the context of the Best City Ambition.

It was noted that following the approval of the Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy update in October 2021 the Scrutiny Board had committed to receive an annual update on progress. The 2022 update was originally scheduled to be discussed in the 2022/23 municipal year but unfortunately had to be deferred. Members of the 2022/23 Board therefore recommended that the successor Scrutiny Board should consider the update as early as possible in the new municipal year.

It was noted that the report provided to members summarised annual progress for last year as presented to Executive Board in February 2022, along with several updates on progress given the timing.

In response to a request from the Scrutiny Board additional information had also been included in relation to park and ride provision.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Helen Hayden, Executive Member
- Mick Bunting, WYCA, Interim Director of Transport Operations and Passenger Experience
- Gary Bartlett, Chief Officer, Transportation & Highways
- Paul Foster, Transport Planning Manager

Councillor Hayden informed the Board of the progress with the Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy and the wide consultation that had taken place in relation to its launch. She welcomed the tangible results were now beginning to be seen in the city centre, and the progress delivered through Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme (LPTIP). Thanks were expressed to all the team and partners who had been involved in this work to date.

The Chief Officer Transport and Highways set out the current position in relation to several issues highlighted in the report including:

- The Vision Zero Strategy. The Chief Officer highlighted that on average last year 46 people were killed or seriously injured on Leeds roads each month, with that rising to 117 people across West Yorkshire.
- Rail Projects including the construction of the White Rose station. It was noted that construction is expected to have been completed by the end of the calendar year with an operational date anticipated in early 2024.
- Major Highways & Transportation Projects – including City Square and Armley Gyrotory works.
- The use of personal delivery robots and the decision to approve further pilot projects in other areas of the city.

- Introduction of a local e-bike scheme.
- Funding challenges due to inflation costs and the impact on construction.
- Challenges to reach net zero carbon targets.
- The statutory obligation for West Yorkshire Combined Authority to produce a Transport Strategy for West Yorkshire by 2024. Members were advised that WYCA is awaiting additional guidance from central government, required to support the development of the strategy.
- The challenges and opportunities associated with the development of a mass transit system in partnership with WYCA.

The Interim Director of Transport Operations and Passenger Experience provided an overview in relation to bus reform, highlighting the following matters:

- A decision on bus reform is anticipated in March 24, which will determine the operating model for bus provision in West Yorkshire.
- The volatility in the market, service reductions and the pressure that creates for communities.
- Government support to maintain the current network.

Members were invited to ask questions and make comment on the report. Discussion included the following:

Streetscape

- The introduction of temporary low transport streets and street closures. Members were advised that a number of those schemes have been revised or removed following dialogue with the public. Officers are working with local communities to establish how some of those schemes may be made permanent where there is local support. Following learning from the process of introducing those initial schemes, much wider public consultation is taking place in relation to the introduction of potential new schemes. These schemes are devised to prevent rat running but still allow access by car, albeit that may be via a less convenient route.
- All design standards considered accessibility and disability groups were consulted, and incorporate aids such as dropped kerbs, audible crossings and disabled parking.
- Members were assured that emergency services are consulted regarding all schemes.
- The challenges of informing GPS providers of changes to road systems were discussed. The Council informs providers of changes to road access but members were advised the system does not prioritise transport authority notifications. As a result, there have been problems with GPS systems reflecting major changes including those following the closure of City Square. This was a national issue and has been raised with the Department of Transport. It was proposed that the Scrutiny Chair write to the Department of Transport to reiterate the challenges this creates in localities.

- The level of communication and signage in relation to road changes.

Bus Reform

- Bus Service Improvement Plan – additional ‘BSIP plus’ funding will be used to assess the level of service reductions across the region and to restore services where possible to keep communities connected. Members were informed this would help to protect the original BSIP funding, which could be used for enhancing services, and a further £10m for the ‘Superbus’ scheme.
- The challenge of patronage of bus services following changes in working patterns post-covid was explored.
- The position with bus drivers has improved with regards to recruitment and retention and there had been settlements with pay and working conditions.
- Proposals for bus reform are currently undergoing an assessment process. This will be followed by public consultation. A formal decision by the WY Mayor is anticipated in March 2024.
- The Combined Authority has a good working relationship with the bus operators who would remain key partners in any future service provision.
- It was confirmed that WYCA will be liaising with district leads including elected members as part of the process of developing a shortlist of schemes for restoration, funded through the additional BSIP funding. Further information was requested on which services may be considered for further support and how members might feed into that process.
- Work is currently being undertaken to determine the impact of Mayor’s Fares but the impact of Covid-19 pandemic is complicating the process of developing baseline figures for the purpose of evaluating the specific impact of the intervention. The benefits of a simplified fare structure, and the impact of that on patronage, was discussed.
- Fares for children and young people. Members queried apparent inconsistencies in fares and were reassured that this would be fed into the Mayor’s Fares evaluation alongside the results of the customer service satisfaction survey that relate to a simplified fare structure.
- Concern was raised that there is no support for post 18 students who had to travel to sites outside the ring road such as Leeds Trinity University, unlike the provision for students studying within the ring road. This would be taken to the relevant team within WYCA for further discussion.

Rail

- Airport parkway – WYCA is leading on this scheme and detailed work is taking place to develop a business case in relation to this site. There will be an update available later in the year.
- Concern was raised about delays in obtaining KPI data – members were reassured that an update would be available later in the year.

- Concern was raised about connectivity between the White Rose Station and buses from the shopping centre. It was reported that the siting of the station was due to the alignment of the rail track. Some of the land is in third party ownership and it was hoped that there would be connections as part of the scheme. A response from Network would be requested via the Transport Planning Manager.

City Centre

- City Square – The works on City Square are intended to improve the gateway to the city centre from the railway station. The area had been heavily polluted, and it was recognised that a large amount of traffic that used the City Square area did not have a city centre destination. The work has removed traffic and will enable the delivery of future improvements and enhancements for bus services.
- Members queried whether future facilities have been considered to accommodate delivery cyclists who currently wait on public walkways.

Park and Ride

- It was noted that there was a difficult period earlier in the year regarding Park and Ride provision following the introduction of a number of changes to services. Members were informed that services are now on a more secure footing.
- The Board discussed the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent changes in patterns of work on park and ride patronage.
- Potential new sites were discussed. WYCA is developing a Park and Ride strategy for the City. Further issues discussed included licence conditions enabling exclusive operator access to park and ride sites, and the viability of sites that were further out of the city than the existing sites.
- Links to future rail sites will be considered as part of a Park and Ride strategy.
- The challenge of trespassers on Temple Green park and ride site was noted, and work is ongoing with the police with a view to resolving this matter.

Zero Emission Robots

- The new trials were welcomed by the Scrutiny Board.
- It was confirmed that locations for the trials were selected by the operating company.

It was agreed that Mass Transit would be discussed at a future meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the contents of the Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy annual progress report together with the Action Plan 2021-24 be noted.
- (2) Consider how the progress outlined in the appended reports contributes to the ambitions set out in the Council's Best City Ambitions.
- (3) Identify any areas where the Board may wish to conduct further future scrutiny.
- (4) The Scrutiny Chair to write to the Department for Transport to highlight the challenges around notifying GPS providers of changes to road access.
- (5) A remote working group will be arranged to explore issues relating to the development of a mass transit system.

22 Leeds Station Sustainable Travel Gateway - Project Update

The report of the Head of Station Development provided the Board with an update on the Leeds Station Sustainable Travel Gateway Project.

The Chair thanked officers for their time in providing a site visit to Leeds Station.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Helen Hayden, Executive Member
- Angela Lawson, Head of Station Development
- Chloe Drummer, Senior Project Manager
- Angela Barnicle, Chief Officer, Asset Management and Regeneration

Key issues highlighted included the following:

- The project was the first phase of the delivery of the Leeds Station Masterplan.
- Passenger numbers had increased from 9 million in 2000 to 34 million in 2019. It is estimated that this would be at least 40 million by 2040.
- The Masterplan was approved in 2017 and is being delivered in partnership with WYCA, Network Rail and the Department for Transport. It seeks to redevelop Leeds Station and the surrounding area to address issues relating to capacity, accessibility, health and safety, security and connectivity.
- The project is funded by the Department for Transport's Transforming Cities Fund.
- The majority of work is being carried out on Network Rail land and Network Rail will therefore control and maintain the assets after the works have been completed.
- The scope of the project included pedestrianisation of New Station Street, and the relocation of buses and the Hackney taxi rank.
- The hackney taxi rank has temporarily been relocated to Prince's Square by Network Rail due to work taking place on New Station Street.
- Leeds City Council will continue to maintain the limited aspects of the scheme which are on the adopted highway.

- A series of new staircases will be installed alongside two 21-person passenger lifts.
- The new taxi rank will be double the size of the previous rank and will have two feeder ranks. A new shelter will be provided, and a marshal will manage the flow of taxis.
- Environmental improvements to the surrounding area and upgrades to street lighting.
- The provision of a 500-space cycle hub and new cycle lanes.
- Engagement with key stakeholders including local residents and businesses.
- Works on Dark Neville Street will be limited due to future plans for redevelopment works on the station.
- CGI images of how the proposals will look were displayed.

In response to questions and comments from the Board, discussion included the following:

- A response had been sought from Network Rail following concerns regarding arrangements for drop off and pick up at the station and car parking. This included the reduction in waiting time allowed.
- Concerns were raised about congestion at the rear of the station while works were ongoing. Measures have been taken to tackle this including the introduction of a new bus gate and enforcement cameras.
- Safety concerns regarding lighting at the car park have been raised with Network Rail.
- Concern was raised about the lack of visible information about the temporary arrangements for taxis for passengers. This has led to complaints that drivers were losing trade.
- Drop off arrangements remain at the rear of the station. There is step free access and parking bays for passengers with disabilities.
- Concerns regarding connectivity from the station to the bus and coach stations.
- When bus services were relocated, work was carried out with WYCA to provide information about the changes and an app is available to provide up to date information on buses.
- The entrance to City Square from the station will remain.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and a further session with Network Rail will be arranged for a future date.

23 **Work Schedule**

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which included a draft work programme for the municipal year 2023/24. This collated requests from members of the 2022/23 Board and known items of business such as budget consultation and performance monitoring.

Recent Executive Board minutes were appended to the report.

RESOLVED – That the report and work schedule be noted.

24 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 27 September 2023 at 10.30 a.m. Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 10.15 a.m.