

SCRUTINY BOARD (INFRASTRUCTURE, INVESTMENT & INCLUSIVE GROWTH)

WEDNESDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY, 2024

PRESENT: Councillor A Marshall-Katung in the Chair

Councillors N Buckley, B Flynn, M Foster,
J Garvani, S Hamilton, S Lay, M Millar,
M Shahzad, N Sharpe and I Wilson

86 APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection documents.

87 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

88 Late Items

There were no late items.

89 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

90 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from Cllr Arif Hussain.

91 Minutes - 3 January 2024 and 10 January 2024

RESOLVED: The minutes of both 3 January and 10 January 2024 were approved.

92 Matters Arising

Minute 82 – The Chair noted that Scrutiny Board member comments regarding the budget proposals were included in a joint report to Executive Board on 7 February 2024 and were also included in the document pack presented to Council on 21 February 2024.

93 Flood Risk Management

The Chair introduced the item, highlighting that the remit of the Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth) requires members to receive an annual update on the Council's local flood risk management strategy.

Those in attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Helen Hayden (Executive Member)
- Gary Bartlett (Chief Officer, Transportation and Highways)
- Jonathan Moxon (Executive Manager – Flood Risk & Climate Resilience)
- Vanessa Allen (Principal Engineer)

Cllr Hayden introduced the item, highlighting the national recognition for the approach to flood risk management in Leeds. She thanked the team for their dedication through a “relentlessly” wet year during which the city has experienced multiple storms.

Jonathan Moxon delivered a presentation to members highlighting the following issues:

- Changing patterns of extreme weather events and increased levels of rainfall.
- The number of incidents reported to the Flood Risk Management team between January 2023 and January 2024.
- Engagement with planning applications.
- Progress to date with the implementation of flood risk management schemes including FAS2.
- A video of residents presenting their reactions to the Otley Flood Alleviation Scheme.
- Progress at Farnley Wood Beck, Sheepscar Beck and Wortley Beck.
- Nature-based solutions to flooding.
- The role of the Aire Resilience Company.

Members welcomed the work being carried out in the city and extended their thanks to all those involved.

Councillors sought further information about the impact of new housing developments on surface water and ‘run off.’

Jonathan Moxon assured members that his team works very closely with planning colleagues, including those in planning enforcement. He highlighted the advice provided to developers about measures to ensure effective water management during the build process.

Board members sought assurances about the risk to the city of underground water management systems and queried who would be responsible for future maintenance of these systems.

Jonathan confirmed that the preference in the flood risk management team is visible measures to manage water. However, developers often prefer tanks, crates and oversized pipes. A management company will typically have responsibility for the long-term maintenance of a surface water system. The Council would be reluctant to adopt underwater management systems due to the increased risks posed by such works.

Jonathan confirmed that recruitment and retention of specialist staff such as engineers remains challenging.

Members expressed frustration about the difficulty in being able to contact Yorkshire Water directly. In response, Jonathan noted the ongoing work to strengthen relationships with Yorkshire Water. He informed the Scrutiny Board that the Council and the Environment Agency are also exploring the potential for a more formalised partnership approach to flood risk management with Yorkshire Water.

Referring to several examples highlighted by members, Jonathan noted the challenge of balancing local interventions with the potential impact on the wider water catchment area.

Members sought more information about the communication strategies adopted by the team and the challenge of ensuring flood risk management remains a priority for residents and businesses in Leeds.

Gary Bartlett reiterated the pace of change in delivering flood alleviation schemes in Leeds over the last 15 years.

RESOLVED: Members reviewed and commented upon the implementation of the Flood Risk Management Strategy.

94 Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy Action Plan Annual Update 2023

The Chair introduced the item, noting that following the approval of the Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy Action Plan in October 2021, the Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth) committed to receive an annual update on progress.

The Chair put on record the Scrutiny Board's congratulations to the Development Team for their recognition in 3 categories in the 2023 Transport Awards that took place at the end of 2023.

The Chair noted that separate dedicated sessions have taken place with the Scrutiny Board in relation to Vision Zero and the Future of Bus Provision in the City. Members were therefore encouraged to prioritise scrutiny of other subjects during the time available for this item.

Those in attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Helen Hayden (Executive Member)
- Cllr Peter Carlill (Deputy Chair, WYCA Transport Committee)
- Gary Bartlett (Chief Officer, Transportation and Highways)
- Paul Foster (Transport Planning Manager)

Gary Bartlett introduced the item, noting the ambition of the strategy had been recognised by the Department for Transport.

Paul Foster noted that around £750m has been invested in infrastructure projects across the city including Armley Gyratory, East Leeds Orbital Road and Regent Street Flyover in recent years.

Referring to the analysis of extensive data gathering in the city, Paul highlighted the challenge of identifying behaviour change that has been driven by interventions linked to the strategy as opposed to more general trends that have emerged post-pandemic.

Paul highlighted that the change in mode split in the city centre since 2021/22 coincided with changes to city square, which have made walking and cycling more attractive.

There has been an increase in the overall number of vehicle kilometres travelled and it is anticipated that national data will show a similar trend in carbon emissions once that is published.

Paul Foster and Cllr Carlill clarified member queries relating to bus patronage figures in the report.

A member of the Board queried whether there is a correlation between an increase in the number of LGV (vans) and increased internet shopping facilitated by people working from home.

Assurances were sought about whether interventions to promote improved air quality and active travel, are discouraging car travel to such an extent that the city centre economy is being adversely impacted.

Members were assured that economic data shows the city centre recovery is ongoing with increases in footfall, particularly over the Christmas period, and rail travel. Councillors were reminded that there are several car parks available for journeys where the city centre is the destination. However, most car journeys through city square had previously been traffic 'passing through' the city centre.

Cllr Carlill highlighted that patterns of bus patronage have changed and expressed an ambition for the network to adapt to reflect those new trends.

It was confirmed that following a trial of powered two-wheeler access to bus lanes on the A65, these arrangements will be in place on a permanent basis. However, future expansion remains under review.

Other matters discussed by Board members included:

- An update about the pilot schemes involving Starship delivery robot service.

- The future use of cargo bikes.
- The need for improved directional signage across the city.
- Access to disability parking spaces while major works are being carried out in the city.
- Varying air quality on different sections of the road network. A report on air quality will be considered by the Executive Board shortly.
- Bus fares for children and young people.
- Access to operational data from bus operators.
- The next stage of consultation on a mass transit system for Leeds.
- The future expansion of school streets and the criteria associated with their introduction.
- The use of the e-bike hire scheme that was launched in September 2023.

A member of the Scrutiny Board requested clarity over parking arrangements linked to White Rose station. Officers agreed to seek further information from West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Cllr Buckley left the meeting at 12.57pm.

RESOLVED: The Scrutiny Board noted and considered the contents of the Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy Annual Update.

95 Work Schedule

RESOLVED: Members considered the draft 2023/24 work programme.

96 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place on **3 April 2024** at **10.30am**. There will be a pre-meeting for all Board members at **10.15am**.