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Scrutiny Inquiry Report

Integrated Transport Strategies for Leeds and the Wider Region

April 2010



Introduction and Scope

Introduction

1. At the start of the 2009/2010 municipal year, we agreed to carry out an inquiry into the Integrated Transport Strategies for Leeds and the Wider Region.
2. In June 2009 we discussed the Local Transport Act 2008 and its implications for decision making both within Leeds and more widely. As a consequence we were keen to explore the development of arrangements with partner organisations to deliver better services.
3. We wanted to consider the way in which the needs and priorities of Leeds as a city are represented in transport planning. In particular we wanted to consider the integration of transport strategies and the role of the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority (WYITA)¹.
4. An important driver for this inquiry was the Local Area Agreement strategic outcome *“Increased accessibility and connectivity through investment in a high quality transport system and through influencing others and changing behaviours”*.
5. In addition, as enhancing transport connectivity is a central feature of the Leeds City Region Multi Area Agreement. We believed it was vital that the needs of the city are appropriately represented at every level.

Scope of the Inquiry

6. We agreed to examine the following areas:
 - The way in which the needs of Leeds and its citizens are served by the existing strategic arrangements, at city and regional level.
 - The impact which the Local Transport Act (2008) will have on existing arrangements and priorities, and in particular the way in which the new powers of the WYITA will be used to further those objectives which are of particular importance to Leeds.
 - The governance arrangements for transport strategy within West Yorkshire and in the Leeds City Region and the way in which the needs of the people of Leeds are represented at each level.

¹ The WYITA replaced the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority on the 9th February 2009



Conclusions and Recommendations

Transport Governance Arrangements

7. We noted that the Local Transport Act 2008 urged Metropolitan District Councils and their Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) to take advantage of the provisions within the Act to strengthen governance arrangements. The purpose was to introduce more strategic and efficient management of transport across the Metropolitan area and potentially a wider city region area. The objective was to avoid the fragmentation, identified in the Act as a major problem, which occurs because district councils have responsibilities for highways functions and the ITA has responsibility for the public transport function. The Transport Act provides the opportunity for an Integrated Transport Authority with broader powers and the skills necessary to overcome this fragmentation, taking a more strategic approach but with one voice for transport and an emphasis on delivery.
8. We were provided with a copy of Atkins Consultants report which focused on a review of transport governance arrangements undertaken on behalf of Leeds City Region partners.
9. We noted that there was strong support amongst partners for a wider city region Integrated Transport Authority and noted that any formal arrangements would require the agreement of North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York to progress. As this has not been achieved, a more incremental set of reforms have been agreed by the City Region Leaders Board as a first stage:
 - A formal governance scheme for West Yorkshire and;
 - A strengthened partnership arrangement for the city region.
10. We were advised that the Leaders' Board earlier in 2009 had agreed to progress the development work needed to implement the governance reforms for the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority (WYITA), with strengthened city region partnership; in accordance with the recommendations made by Atkins Consultants.
11. At our meeting in October 2009 we were advised of the progress made by the City Region Partnership; designated a Forerunner City Region by the Government; to develop Forerunner proposals which would bring a range of freedoms and flexibilities to the City Region.
12. We were informed that a Leeds City Region Transport Strategy was to be approved by the Leaders at the Transport Summit in Harrogate in November 2009.
13. The forerunner pilot agreement was subsequently signed by the Leaders with the Minister for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) Rosie Winterton MP along with other city region representatives on 27th November 2009. The LCR Transport Strategy was also approved at this meeting.



Conclusions and Recommendations

14. We recognised that the Leeds City Region Transport strategy, forms an integral part of the more locally focused Local Transport Plans (LTP) and will set the transport vision and direct future major investment decisions, policies and actions across the region.

West Yorkshire

15. For West Yorkshire, Atkins proposed that the new, more focussed ITA would develop, coordinate, and allocate funding for, the implementation of the LTP3 Schemes which will be implemented through the existing district delivery arrangements with all traffic, highway and street powers remaining with the districts. A Power of Direction could be made available to the ITA to ensure agreed LTP priorities are delivered effectively.

Leeds City Region

16. For the wider City Region partnership, Atkins proposed that the reforms included a strengthened Transport Panel with some decision making powers devolved to it, for example, from the Leaders' Board. The Transport Panel will be responsible for delivering the City Region Transport Strategy and the Multi Area and Forerunner Agreements.

17. We support the view that there needs to be a degree of delegation from the Leaders' Board (and other bodies) to the Leeds City Region Transport Panel to increase the capacity and to strengthen its role particularly as the Chair of the Panel will champion the transportation cause at a regional and national level.

18. We noted that the potential for the Panel to be convened under Joint Committee arrangements needed further examination and advice from the Legal Officers Group but initial feedback was that a Leeds City Region Transport Joint Committee would be feasible.

19. We acknowledged that the greater decision making powers that would flow to the Panel would necessitate a review of a number of issues e.g.

- Clarification of where the powers would come from (e.g. DfT, Leaders' Board, individual Local Authorities, WYITA/ Metro);
- Membership review – inclusion of key stakeholders e.g. Yorkshire Forward, Government Office and Local Authorities not currently Panel members;
- The merits of weighted voting and veto rights would need discussion and clarification;
- Scrutiny arrangements to ensure transparency and accountability; and,
- Depending on the outcome of the above, the role and Membership of the Connectivity Partnership would also need to be clarified.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the proposed revised Terms of Reference for the Leeds City Region Transport Panel as set out in Appendix 1 of this report be used as the basis for further iterations of the Terms of Reference and consideration by all the parties concerned.



Conclusions and Recommendations

West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority (WYITA) - Interim Arrangements

- 20. Our attention was drawn to the fact that Atkins made a strong recommendation that the new WYITA needed to be more strategic in its modus operandi and recommended the number of WYITA Members should be reduced, from the current number of 22 to 10. The proposal was that the 10 would comprise relevant Cabinet / Executive Members from each of the 5 authorities responsible for Highways & Transportation. A change from 22 to 10 would require a change in legislation. We noted that Atkins had advised that due to the nature and complexity of the statutory and Parliamentary processes involved this could take up to 2 years before any reforms could be implemented, on a formal basis.
- 21. We were concerned that this approach of reducing membership of the WYITA from 22 to 10 would reduce local representation and make proportionality difficult to achieve.
- 22. We were aware that there had been consistent opposition to Atkins proposal from existing Members of the WYPTA.
- 23. The WYITA supported an alternative proposal which maintained a larger West Yorkshire ITA membership but with an Executive formed from within that membership. The WYITA argument was that this combination of approaches facilitated in the wider WYITA, appropriate representation of both population and political mix, whilst an Executive Board of say eight in number could deliver efficient decision making and achieve political balance. We were informed that the WYITA has when

establishing any committee, to have regard to the appropriate Local Government Acts which require political balance.

- 24. At our meeting in October we supported the proposed interim arrangements that would see the establishment of an eight member Executive Board with effect from 1 January 2010.
- 25. We believe that these interim arrangements will bring about stronger governance arrangements that provide clear strategic transport direction which would not in any way prohibit a future submission of a formal governance scheme at a later date.

Recommendation 2

We endorse the establishment of an 8 Member Executive Board for the WYITA which came into effect on 1st January 2010. We note that the 8 Members will be selected from the overall membership of 22 and recommend that representation on the Executive Board come from all 5 West Yorkshire authorities.

- 26. We noted that the full WYITA has a role in relation to scrutiny, audit and governance.

Recommendation 3

We note that the full WYITA has an important scrutiny role to perform but would welcome the development of scrutiny arrangements for the city region as a whole that are regionally based to aid the transparency, objectivity, efficiency and accountability of the process and ask the Leaders Board to give consideration to this proposal.



Conclusions and Recommendations

27. We noted the concerns expressed by the Director General of Metro on behalf of Mr Ian Williams, Director of Business Representation and Policy, Chamber of Commerce regarding the need to have private business sector representation on the WYITA.

28. We supported the principle of business and community representation on the WYITA but without voting rights.

Recommendation 4

We support the need to consider how private and community sector representation could be achieved on the WYITA without voting rights and ask that this be considered in a future review.

29. We welcomed the statement by the Director General of Metro that the WYITA intend to proceed with the introduction of Quality Bus Contracts (QBC) that will impose on operators a level and frequency of bus service on specific routes as part of a bus strategy that forms part of the Local Transport Plan.

Recommendation 5

We strongly support the decision of the WYITA to proceed with the introduction of Quality Bus Contracts as a means of imposing on operators a level and frequency of bus service that is required on specific routes.

30. We understand that a more detailed work programme around transport governance issues have yet to be developed because the City Development department, Metro and the

WYITA are awaiting feedback from the Department for Transport (DfT) on the processes that would need to be followed for any future submission of a formal governance scheme.

Recommendation 6

That a further report on transport governance issues be submitted to this Scrutiny Board for consideration once a more detailed work programme has been developed.



Evidence

Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

Reports and Publications Submitted

- Reports of the Chief Officer Highways and Transportation
- Atkins Report
- Report of the Director General of Metro
- Report by Parish Councillor George Hall.



Evidence

Witnesses Heard

- Mr Gary Bartlett, Chief Officer Highways and Transportation, Leeds City Council
- Councillor Ryk Downes, Chair of the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority (WYITA)
- Mr Kieran Preston, Director General Metro
- Councillor G E Hall, Barwick and Scholes Parish Councillor

Dates of Scrutiny

10th September 2009

8th October 2009

7th January 2010

16th April 2010



Appendix 1

Leeds City Region Transport Panel

Revised draft terms of reference

The proposal is that a revised City Region Transport Panel will be a formally constituted Joint Committee with powers delegated to it from Central Government, the City Region Leaders' Board, Local Authorities and other agencies, as appropriate. It will be a political body making strategic decisions on transport for the City Region.

The Panel will:

1. Be responsible for the production, monitoring and implementation of the City Region Transport Strategy
2. Be responsible for prioritising major transport investment projects via the Regional Funding Allocation and any pooled resources or other funding mechanisms
3. Ensure alignment of LTP policies and programmes across the City Region
4. Bring about strengthened partnership arrangements and alignment of programmes and budgets with the Department for Transport, the Highways Agency and Network Rail.
5. Ensure the City Region Transport Strategy aligns with the economic, regeneration and spatial plans for the City Region
6. Be consulted on and will make comment (non-statutory, in the first

instance) on major applications, plans and major policy documents affecting the City Region at local, regional or national levels

7. Champion and provide the political voice on transport for the City Region
8. Co-ordinate policy and decision making by having strong links with other Joint Committees and Panels

The Panel will:

1. Comprise representatives from each of the LCR Transport Authorities and be Portfolio holders and/or Cabinet/ Chair/ Executive Members.
2. Comprise no more than 10 Members (5 from West Yorkshire, City of York, North Yorkshire County Council, Barnsley, West Yorkshire ITA and South Yorkshire ITA.
3. Be supported by a revised Connectivity Partnership
4. Keep the Leaders' Board informed of progress via regular updates and reports.
5. Have the facility to involve non-elected and non-voting representatives to advise the Panel, as and when appropriate.
6. Be subject to Scrutiny arrangements

**Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships) Integrated Transport Strategies
for Leeds and the Wider Region**

Date April 2010

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