

Scrutiny Committee Consultation Call Minutes

Wednesday 07 July 2021
Virtual

Present:

Attendee	Local Authority
Cllr Paul Haslam (Chair)	North Yorkshire
Cllr David O'Hara	Blackpool;
Cllr Andrew Cooper	Cheshire West & Chester;
Cllr Roger Jones	Greater Manchester Combined Authority;
Cllr Sean Chaytor	Hull;
Cllr Matthew Salter	Lancashire;
Cllr John Davison	North Lincolnshire;
Cllr Richard Wearmouth	North of Tyne Combined Authority;
Cllr Ashley Waters	Tees Valley;
Cllr Steve Parish	Warrington;
Cllr Stephen Fenton	York;

Officers in Attendance:

Name	Job Title
Gary Rich	Democratic Services Officer
Dawn Madin	Director of Business Capabilities
Julie Openshaw	Head of Legal
Tim Wood	Interim Chief Executive
Rosemary Lyon	Legal & Democratic Services Officer
Peter Molyneux	Major Roads Director
Deborah Dimock	Solicitor
David Hoggarth	Strategic Rail Director
Tim Foster	Interim Strategy & Programme Director

**Item
No:**

Item

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and specifically welcomed new Member Cllr Wearmouth.

- 1.2 Apologies were received from Cllr Hughes, Cllr Ferneaux, Cllr Crane and Cllr Kaushik.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no Declarations of interest

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee held on 15 April 2021 were considered. The Chairman explained that as this is not a formal meeting of the Committee, the minutes could not be approved and were for noting only and would be presented for formal approval at the September meeting.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee held on 15 April 2021 be noted.

4. Monthly Operating Report

- 4.1 Members received the Monthly Operating Report from the Interim Strategy and Programme Director who highlighted the key areas of the report before taking questions from Members on a variety of issues.
- 4.2 In relation to the Manchester Recovery Taskforce Cllr Jones expressed concern that Members are unaware of any of the proposed infrastructure changes.

The Interim Strategy and Programme Director explained that there are a number of tranches of infrastructure proposed which are linked to changes in the timetable. He further explained that the infrastructure to make the 2022 timetable work is limited and mainly involves upgrades to station platforms. He explained that the wider issue surrounds the larger infrastructure changes during the next 5 years.

- 4.3 The Interim Chief Executive explained that there are three potential tranches of work being developed in the Manchester Castlefield corridor and the surrounding areas over the next 10-15 years. He further explained that TfN is now reviewing with the DfT and Network Rail some of the alternatives in order to achieve the best outcomes. He stated that TfN has not supported a May timetable change on the East Coast Main Line.
- 4.4 Cllr Chaytor expressed concern that services along the East side of the country are being affected. He requested that pressure be applied on the Train Operating Companies to address this.

- 4.5 Cllr Salter welcomed the Stakeholder communication work particularly the social media work and requested that this continues.

In relation to train usage, Cllr Salter requested projections on returning to medium to high usage levels on the trains as the pandemic subsides.

The Interim Strategy and Programme Director explained that it is difficult to give an exact projection but the expectation is that there will be a return to something approaching previous levels during the next six months to two years. He explained that confidence and safety is vital and work is being undertaken with operators and the Department for Transport on this.

The Interim Chief Executive explained that the vast majority of people are expected to be returning to their cars due to capacity on the rail network. He highlighted the importance of investment so that capacity can be increased and passengers guaranteed a strong service pattern.

- 4.6 Cllr Chaytor highlighted the need to open some of the closed lines in order to get passengers back on the trains and requested that officers explore this.

The Interim Strategy and Programme Director stated that this will be addressed.

- 4.7 Cllr Parish requested a summary of road rail schemes.

Resolved:

That the Monthly Operating Report be noted.

5. Review of Scrutiny Function

- 5.1 Members received the report from the Solicitor who provided background and outlined the key areas of the report. She explained that there had been a low return on the questionnaire that had been circulated to Members and suggested recirculating it if Members agreed. Members were also informed that there had been no interest expressed in forming a working group to review the future role of the Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.2 Members expressed satisfaction with the current 'scrutiny first' approach. It was suggested that the Chair should be given authority to include items on the agenda not going to Board if deemed urgent.
- 5.3 Members agreed that the questionnaire should be re-circulated and that the Scrutiny Review should remain as a standing item for the next two meetings.

- 5.4 Members discussed the issue of virtual and face to face meetings. The Solicitor explained that the Constitution allows for one meeting per year face to face.

Members expressed differing views as to how they wish to proceed regarding virtual and face to face meetings and it was proposed that there should be a question included in the questionnaire on how Members wish to meet going forward.

- 5.5 The Chair raised the issue of the Government Bus Back Better proposals and suggested that officers review the work that has been done. He requested that a report be brought back to the next committee meeting.

Cllr Davison urged caution on this due to the different rural and urban issues that exist on the matter.

The interim Strategy and Programme Director stated that TfN could add some value to this area and believed that a report could be written setting out a collective approach for the North.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted;
- 2) That the Scrutiny Review questionnaire be recirculated to Members;
- 3) That the Scrutiny Review be a standing item for discussion at the September and November 2021 meetings;
- 4) That a report on the Bus Back Better proposals be requested for the Scrutiny Committee at the September 2021 meeting.

6. Rail Reform Matters: Responding to the White Paper

- 6.1 The Rail Reform Matters report was received by Members. The Head of Rail Specification and Delivery then outlined the key points of the report.
- 6.2 Cllr Parish raised the issue of compensation in the event of trains being late.
- 6.3 Cllr O'Hara raised the issue of co-ordination and fare prices.
- 6.4 Cllr Jones suggested that TfN should have a role in running the local rail services in the North of England.
- 6.5 In response to Members' questions the Head of Rail Specification Delivery explained that the idea behind the creation of a single body relates to accountability and that this is the North's chance to influence future developments.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the White Paper, and its focus on addressing the problems caused by the past fragmentation of the railway industry;

- 2) That Transport for the North continues to seek clarity from Government that the existing arrangements and statutory powers of Transport for the North are not proposed to be changed, to enable it to continue to provide a strong influence Transport for the North's future role.

7. Decarbonisation Strategy

- 7.1 Members received the presentation from the Principal Environmental and Sustainability Officer and the Senior Corporate Engagement Officer; Members were then invited to ask questions.
- 7.2 The Chair asked about the response from Local Authorities and enquired about promotional work done through Facebook, offering his assistance by promoting it via his own Facebook page.

The Senior Corporate Engagement Officer explained that all local authorities in the North have been invited to participate but he is unsure as to the level of response received as this is being collated separately.

The Senior Corporate Engagement Officer stated that he would send out links to the Chair in order that he can promote it.

- 7.3 Cllr Salter expressed concern that there was too much focus on people living in the cities and not enough attention to those living in rural areas and how they travel.

Resolved:

That the presentation be noted.

8. Northern Powerhouse Rail Update

- 8.1 The report was received by the by Members and the Interim Chief Executive highlighted the key sections of the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the progress on implementing the agreed scope of work for Northern Powerhouse Rail for the financial year 2021/22, model development and the strategic outline case;
- 2) That the Committee notes the plan to review and respond to the Integrated Rail Plan.