

Transport for the North Chief Executive Consultation Call (Board) Minutes

**Tuesday 27 July 2021
Virtual**

Present:

John Cridland (Chairman)

Attendee

Cllr Louise Gittins
Mayor Andy Burnham

Cllr Daren Hale
Cllr Charles Edwards
Mayor Steve Rotheram
Mayor Jamie Driscoll
Mayor Dan Jarvis
Cllr Heather Scott
Cllr Hans Mundry
Mayor Tracy Brabin
Cllr Andy D'Agorne

Local Authority

Cheshire West & Chester;
Greater Manchester Combined
Authority;
Hull
Lancashire;
Liverpool City Region;
North of Tyne Combined Authority
Sheffield City Region;
Tees Valley Combined Authority
Warrington;
West Yorkshire Combined Authority;
York;

Rail North Authorities Attendees

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Attendees

Steve Curl
Mark Rawstron
Mark Roberts
Lucy Winskell
Peter Kennan

Cumbria LEP
Lancashire LEP
Leeds LEP
North East LEP
Sheffield City Region LEP

Partners in Attendance:

Officers in Attendance:

Name**Job Title****Item
No:****Item****1. Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed Members to the consultation call and apologies were noted.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed the incoming Chief Executive who attended the meeting as an observer. He also extended his thanks to the Interim Chief Executive for all his hard work over the last three and a half months.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2021 were considered. The Chairman explained that as this is not a formal meeting of the Board, the minutes could not be approved and were for noting only and would be presented for approval at the September meeting.

Resolved:

That the minutes from the Consultation Call on 9 June be noted.

Cllr Gittins suggested that Item 10 be taken first due to the importance of the issue and that some Members may be required to leave the meeting early. The Chairman and Members were in agreement with Cllr Gittins and Members discussed Item 10 first.

4. Governance Report

- 4.1 Members received the Governance report from the Transport for the North Head of Legal. The Chairman then summarised the key points in the report which was taken as read.
- 4.2 Peter Kennan expressed particular support for one of the proposed Constitutional changes which will allow Members unable to attend to a meeting in person to do so virtually at the Chair's discretion.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board notes the interim arrangements for the Chair of the Board and Partnership Board;
- 2) That Board notes the work of the Members' Working Group (MWG) and endorses the recommendations of the MWG in relation to the General Purposes Committee;
- 3) That Board authorises the Director of Business Capabilities, in consultation with the Members' Working Group, to agree the Chief Executive's probationary objectives, for agreement with him;
- 4) That the Board indicates its support for the proposed amendments to the Constitution to allow remote participation in meetings;
- 5) That the Board notes the proposal for the appointment of a new Independent Member of the Audit and Governance Committee;
- 6) That the Board endorses the recommendations of the Members' Working Group in relation to the Annual Meeting and future meetings of the Board.

5. Budget Revision 1

- 5.1 Members received the Budget Revision 1 Report of the Finance Director. The Chairman then summarised the report which taken as read by Members.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board notes the contents of the report and approves the Budget Revision 1;
- 2) That Board notes the first quarter budget virements and that these have now been absorbed into this Revision.

6. Spending Review Planning

- 6.1 The report of the Strategy and Programme Director was received by Members. The Chairman then summarised the report which was taken as read.

Resolved:

That Board notes the likely timetable for the Spending Review, and the likely need to engage with Members in advance of the September 2021 Board meeting.

7. Freight Strategy

- 7.1 Members received the report and the draft Freight Strategy from the Strategy and Programme Director. The Principal Policy Officer for Freight and Logistics then highlighted the key points in the report and the

strategy before Members were able to ask questions and make comments.

- 7.2 The Principal Policy Officer for Freight and Logistics highlighted two specific issues for Members' attention. Firstly, she explained that the version Members received was continuing to evolve: it did not yet reflect the comments received from constituent authority officers relating to decarbonisation; as a result this section of the Strategy would need strengthening prior to consultation. She further explained that the policy did not reflect other comments received from constituent authority officers so these would also be included. On the issue of interventions, the Principal Policy Officer explained that these would be reinserted back into the Strategy.
- 7.3 The Chairman explained that the Strategy will be published in the Autumn for consultation.
- 7.4 Mr Peter Kennan requested that dialogue with LEPs takes place before it goes out to open consultation. He also suggested that strategy should tie into other priorities as well and not only decarbonisation. It was confirmed that congestion points will be included.

The Principal Policy Officer for Freight and Logistics explained that she would expand the information on congestion points.

- 7.5 Cllr Scott highlighted that HS2 Eastern leg is important to freight in the future and this needs to be added to the Strategy.

Resolved:

That the Board agrees to move to external consultation.

8. Northern Transport Charter

- 8.1 Members received the report from the Acting Head of Policy and Strategy. The Chairman summarised the report before inviting Members to ask questions and make comments.
- 8.2 Mr. Kennan raised the issue of the Citizens Assembly and expressed concern about the cost against the benefit of such a project and asked to see further information on this.
- 8.3 Mayor Driscoll highlighted the benefits of a Citizen Assembly after this had worked well in his area. He explained that they are really valuable but require an oversight panel to set the Terms of Reference and the questions that they need to examine.

- 8.4 The interim Strategy and Programme Director explained that officers will work with the Member Working Group for the Northern Transport Charter to design and test a pilot approach and provide the Board with reassurance before wider rollout.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board approved the Comms & Engagement plan outlined in Appendix 2 of the report to support the activities outlined in paragraph 4 of the report regarding 'Telling the NTC story.'
- 2) That Board approved the high-level activities in paragraph 5.3 which will allow delivery at pace against KPI 20 in the Business plan.

9. Accessibility at Stations

- 9.1 Members received the report of the Strategic Rail Director. The Head of Rail Specification and Delivery then outlined the key elements of the report.
- 9.2 Mr. Steve Curl suggested that there should be a wider assessment as advocated in the Green Book. He further suggested that stations should be looked that have poor accessibility and should look beyond the red list of stations.
- 9.3 Cllr Hale expressed concern about the economics of the matter. He believed that footfall would increase at stations when they become accessible as people unable to access stations currently due to accessibility will look to use different stations where there are no access issues.

He emphasised the importance of rail companies and station operators working with Members, TfN and user groups when they want to make changes to accessibility which may affect users.

He also highlighted that it is not just an issue of accessibility on to the trains but how passengers with disabilities are able to traverse larger stations as well.

- 9.4 Cllr Scott explained that Tees Valley is considering a programme of station interventions which will need to dovetail in with the work TfN is doing.
- 9.5 Mayor Brabin highlighted the fact that 57% of stations within the West Yorkshire Combined Authority are not up to standard. She also highlighted the need for there to be an integrated network of transport able to get passengers to the stations.

- 9.6 Mayor Burnham stated that the report needs to reflect the local approaches and further suggested that devolution of stations would further strengthen it.
- 9.7 Mayor Rotherham explained that Liverpool City Region was offered devolved stations when Chris Grayling MP was Secretary of State. He stated that there is a Memorandum of Understanding which has been waiting to be signed off by the Secretary of State for the last 18 months.
- 9.8 The Chairman suggested that the matter be connected with objectives for overall devolution.
- 9.9 The Strategic Rail Director stated that this would now be moved to a Strategic Case for investment and a further report would then be presented. He committed to working with Members to strengthen their local cases.

Resolved:

That Board agrees to the next stages in the workstreams described in the report namely:

- That Strategic Rail work with Technical Assurance, Modelling & Economics (TAME) to assess the potential for stations enhancements at all Category C to F stations in the North, in order to allocate them to one of the three potential routes to implementation;
- For those stations for which a strong economic case is identified for a package of accessibility and facilities enhancements, TfN Strategic Rail will commit resources to developing business cases for submission to the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline;
- For stations with an intermediate economic case, TfN Strategic Rail will work with Local Transport Authorities and other partners in order to identify solutions which will strengthen the business case for packages of interventions by harnessing local knowledge. TfN's resources (such as assistance from TAME and the models in our Analytical Framework) can be used to complement appraisal undertaken by our partners and help them to develop successful business cases for stations improvements;
- For stations with a poor economic case, the case for accessibility improvements will continue to be made on social inclusion and regulatory grounds, with funding being sought from the Access for All programme and Mid-Tier fund;
- The above workstreams will be defined and co-ordinated through the development of an overall Strategic Outline Business Case for investment in accessibility in the North's railway stations; and
- TfN will use its influence through Rail North Partnership to progress the standardisation of items such as station branding, accessibility policies, staff training on accessibility issues, and public announcements. Some initiatives in these areas could be started relatively quickly.
- That TfN will work with Local Authorities to strengthen local cases

- That this will be linked to the campaign to devolve station to local control wherever feasible.

10. Northern Powerhouse Rail

- 10.1 Members received the report from the Interim Chief Executive who highlighted the key parts of the report. He firstly highlighted the current position regarding the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP).
- 10.2 Members expressed their concerns at the further delay to the IRP.
- 10.3 Cllr Mundry commented that the Treasury is dictating what can be afforded for the North and that there could be conflict between what can be afforded, and the needs are for the North. He suggested that early conversations are required with Ministers so that the priority points for the North can be funded properly.
- 10.4 Referring to the letter sent to the Secretary of State following the last Rail North Committee Meeting, Mayor Brabin highlighted that one of the sought for outcomes was for the IRP to be published in July 2021. She highlighted the economic impacts of the delay to West Yorkshire as a result of the delay and the urgency of the matter and asked what Transport for the North can do in order to expedite matters.
- 10.5 Mr. Mark Rawstron explained that the LEPs would support the voices of the elected members. He explained that the LEPs have agreed to produce a draft letter contributed to by each of LEPs of the "NP11" and businesses, to add weight to elected members' voices.
- Mayor Burnham commented that it is now 7 years since the North was promised transformational rail investment and expressed concern about his belief that the North is being kept uninformed on these matters and that this may be an attempt to force a sub-optimal network on the North without sufficient time to adequately challenge. He commented that the position is very serious and worried him greatly. He also expressed concern that the IRP has not yet been published and implications for the North.
- 10.6 Mayor Jarvis also expressed concern about the delay in publishing the IRP highlighting the impact that it is causing. He explained that the delay is adversely impacting the ability to take other plans forward and negatively impacting on economic development in the North and the business community.
- 10.7 Cllr Hale highlighted the cost implications of delay. He explained the longer the delay the greater likelihood there is to be an increase in costs in construction materials such as steel.
- 10.8 Mayor Driscoll also highlighted the impact that the delay in publication of the IRP is having on his area. As well as affecting business and

investment it is also impacting on train services. He explained that the North East has lost train services due to an historical decision in which there would be investment to increase capacity leading to three services an hour but now they are losing services to the North West.

He expressed concern at the silence he perceived currently from Government and suggested a meeting with Ministers to seek a commitment for publication before the end of the year.

10.9 Cllr Gittins supported the idea that a meeting with the Minister should take place and questioned what could be done whilst waiting for the meeting to take place.

10.10 Cllr Edwards asked if there had been any update on the Green Book which could simplify investment in the North.

10.11 In response to Members' comments the Interim Chief Executive highlighted the importance of business community's involvement in pressing Government on this issue. He commented that this is a major project to open up connectivity across North of England.

He then highlighted the work being done on NPR, explaining that survey work has taken place between Hull and Leeds resulting in a substantial reduction in the cost of the work to be done. He added that Sheffield to Hull would be the next place to be surveyed. He further added that work can also be done at Rotherham and Barnsley Stations.

Highlighting the cost of the Members' preferred network, the Interim Chief Executive explained that he believed that at least £5 billion can be deducted from the current £42 billion assured estimate provided by NR. He agreed with Members' concerns that the longer the wait, the more the costs are likely to increase.

He stated that NPR is a programme that is under financial control, but the team will continue to challenge costs as the Programme develops further and encouraged elected members to work with Government and support TfN's message.

10.12 The Chairman summarised three themes that Members had discussed. These were broadly: business supporting Northern leaders in applying pressure to Government to make a case for a transformational network, reinforcement of the impact that the delay in the publication of the IRP is having and seeking an early meeting with Government.

10.13 The Interim Chief Executive then went on to highlight the current situation with the Manchester Task Force following the letter to the Rail Minister after the Rail North Committee Meeting. He explained that a response is yet to be received but was expected to be imminent. He confirmed that Officers are working collaboratively with the DfT and some good progress is being made.

He expressed the view that there should be no timetable change in the North West in May 2022 and that the same should be the case in the East. He explained that a situation could arise whereby a "Covid timetable" remains in place in the longer term leading to passenger congestion on trains. He commented that investment in rail infrastructure would be likely to lead to people preferring rail transport to car travel.

- 10.14 Mayor Jarvis was pleased that work is being undertaken to reinstate a direct link from Sheffield to Manchester Airport. He requested that as soon as a response is received from Government then this is shared with Members and a meeting convened to discuss a response.
- 10.15 Mayor Brabin commented that Bradford would only have one direct LNER train to London per day under the plans out to consultation for the East Coast Main Line.
- 10.16 Cllr Mundry stated that everyone would lose from these proposals and questioned what the timelines would be in order to be able to hold the Government to account.
- 10.17 Mayor Burnham stated that he was not reassured and believes that the Government is not being open on this matter and expressed disappointment with the lack of response from the Minister to the Interim Chief Executive's letter.

He drew the Board's attention to the fact that In January 2020 the Board resolved to support investment in Central Manchester including 'Package C'. He stated that since this commitment the Department for Transport has made many other suggestions and has not supported 'Package C'. He stated that Members need dates and commitments on this matter and highlighted reports in the media that funding in Control Period 6 will be reduced again.

Mayor Burnham was of the view that Members should refuse the timetable and formally withdraw support for the December 2022 timetable.

- 10.18 At this point in the debate, the Interim Chief Executive informed Members that a response had been received from the Minister during the course of the discussion.
- 10.19 The Chairman asked the Interim Chief Executive to circulate the letter to Members to enable them to return to debate on this item later in the meeting.
- 10.20 The response was circulated, the matter adjourned, and returned to after other agenda items had been dealt with. The Chair highlighted a comment from Mayor Driscoll in the "chat bar" in which he suggested

that Treasury Officials should be requested to be present at any meeting set up with the Minister.

- 10.21 The Interim Chief Executive highlighted the key points of the response from the Minister. He explained that the letter highlights the benefits to passengers of B+ as well as stating their commitment to infrastructure improvements.

The Interim Chief Executive observed that the response indicates that an impasse has arisen on the matter and that a meeting with the Minister is required in order to resolve it. He suggested that the work around the B+ timetable should nonetheless continue in the background whilst awaiting a meeting with the Minister.

- 10.22 Members expressed disappointment with the tone of the letter.
- 10.23 Cllr Mundry believed that Members are being forced into an unwanted situation and that Government appears happy to provide timelines for everything but the start of the infrastructure work.
- 10.24 Mayor Rotheram commented that the letter was not about sharing ownership but devolving blame. He was concerned that any disruption caused could be attributed to the decisions made by the Transport for the North Board.
- 10.25 Mayor Jarvis believed that the letter undermines the Government's ability to work with Members constructively. He deemed neither option which had been presented to Members as acceptable and stated that a meeting with the Minister was needed later in the week.
- 10.26 Mayor Burnham stated that residents will not accept a lack of investment in the North.
- 10.27 The Chairman suggested that the Board continues to strive for a resolution and continue to make the point that acquiescing to "least worst" option needs to be done alongside a commitment to infrastructure improvements.

He agreed that an urgent meeting should be arranged with the Minister Chris Heaton Harris MP to seek a resolution to this issue and that should an agreement not be found then the Board is entitled to maintain its position and is not required to sign up to the "least worst" option if it is something the Board would deem unacceptable.

The Chairman added that the Board and the Rail North Committee should work jointly on this issue and suggested that the Interim Chief Executive together with the incoming Chief Executive work together with the most active Members of the Rail North Committee on this matter to exercise the Board mandate.

The Interim Chief Executive recommended a fourth point be added to the recommended decision in that preparatory work should continue on the B+ timetable.

Mayor Burnham returned to his earlier remark on Control Period six and requested that a firm commitment is gained from Government regarding infrastructure for Central Manchester for this period.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board notes that the IRP will not be published prior to parliamentary recess (starting 22 July) and will now be delayed until September 2021 at the earliest.
- 2) That Board notes that the Strategic Outline Case for NPR is now unlikely to be completed within the FY21/22 and could take 6-12 months from publication of the IRP.
- 3) That Board notes that work will continue in order that progress can be made on implementing the agreed scope of work for FY21/22 and model development, but a review of the future work programme may be likely.
- 4) That Board notes that Officers will work across Transport for the North to understand the implications for the key deliverables and performance indicators set in our 21/22 Business Plan.
- 5) That an urgent meeting be set up with the Minister in order to continue to strive for a resolution of the Central Manchester infrastructure and timetable issue.
- 6) That Board notes that it need not accept the "least worst" timetable option if the Government's response is ultimately deemed unacceptable by it
- 7) That preparatory work should continue on the B+ timetable.

11. Formal Resignation of the Chairman and handover to the Vice Chair as Acting Chair

- 11.1 Just prior to the close of meeting to the Chair handed the Chair role to Cllr Gittins as future Acting Chair and extended to her his very best wishes for the future. He also thanked the Interim Chief Executive, all Members and extended his best wishes to the incoming Chief Executive.
- 11.2 Mayor Burnham led the thanks of the Board prior to the closure of the meeting.