

Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Thursday 09 September 2021
**The Hacienda Suite, Holiday Inn Manchester City Centre, 25 Aytoun
Street**

Present:

Attendee	Local Authority
Cllr Paul Haslam (Chair)	North Yorkshire
Cllr Martin Mitchell	Blackpool;
Cllr Rod Fletcher	Cheshire East;
Cllr Andrew Cooper	Cheshire West & Chester;
Cllr Neil Hughes	Cumbria;
Matthew Salter	Lancashire;
Cllr Lindsay Melia	Liverpool City Region;
Cllr Jim Foreman	North East Combined Authority;
Cllr Steve Parish	Warrington;
Cllr Manisha Kaushik	West Yorkshire Combined Authority;
Cllr Stephen Fenton	York;

Officers in Attendance:

Name	Job Title
Gary Rich	Democratic Services Officer
Julie Openshaw	Head of Legal
Tim Foster	Interim Strategy & Programme Director
Rosemary Lyon	Legal and Democratic Services Officer
Manjit Dhillon	Senior Solicitor

**Item Item
No:**

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all in attendance and informed Members that the meeting was being webcast.

Apologies were received from Cllr Lamb, Cllr Waters, Cllr Davison, Cllr Jones and Cllr Chaytor.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 Cllr Melia made a declaration of interest in relation to Item 6 due to her partner's employment as a Guard on Transpennine Express and membership of the RMT Union.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meetings

- 3.1 The minutes of the meetings held on 15 April and 7 July 2021 were considered and their accuracy as a correct record confirmed. The minutes were proposed by Cllr Fenton and seconded by Cllr Kaushik.
- 3.2 Cllr Hughes asked whether the Decarbonisation Strategy discussed at the April meeting and had been circulated to all local authorities in the North. He also asked why a report on the 'Bus Back Better' strategy which had been requested at the July meeting was not on the agenda.

The interim Planning and Strategy Director explained that to his knowledge communications were sent to all local authorities in the North on the Decarbonisation Strategy. He stated that he would seek clarity on this and update Members. In relation to the Bus Back Better Strategy he confirmed that this will be on the agenda at a later meeting due to the high number of agenda items at this meeting.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 15 April and 7 July 2021 be approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Appointment of the Scrutiny Committee Chair and Vice Chairs

- 4.1 Cllr Parish proposed Cllr Haslam for the position of Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee Chair, and this was seconded by Cllr Salter. Cllr Haslam stood and was elected unopposed.
- 4.2 Cllr Salter proposed Cllr Kaushik and Cllr Hughes as Majority and Minority Party Vice Chairs, and this was seconded by Cllr Parish. Both Cllr Kaushik and Cllr Hughes stood and were elected unopposed.

Resolved:

- 1) That Cllr Haslam be elected as Chair of the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee
- 2) That Cllr Kaushik be elected as Majority Party Vice Chair of the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee
- 3) That Cllr Hughes be elected as the Minority Parties Vice Chair for the Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee.

5. Scrutiny Review

- 5.1 Members received the report from the Senior Solicitor who took Members through the salient points of the report.
- 5.2 Members had differing views as to how they wished to meet for future Scrutiny Committee meetings. Members also discussed the possibility of hybrid meetings. The legality of holding meetings virtually was also raised.

The Chair highlighted that the Audit & Governance Committee had suggested that Board reports should note the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.

Members were also informed that the Chair had spoken with the new Chief Executive who was complimentary of the work of the Committee. He explained that the Chief Executive had discussed with him the possibility of meetings having themes, calling expert witnesses, and having task and finish groups.

- 5.3 Members made a number of suggestions as to future items they would like to discuss including the Beeching line, Manchester Recovery Task Force, timetable issues and fare prices.
- 5.4 Members further discussed the issue of future meetings. The Chair confirmed that consultation calls do not contravene the law. Members were also informed that due to not having the technology Transport for the North is currently unable to offer hybrid meetings.
- 5.5 The Legal and Democratic Services Officer confirmed that legislation only permitted virtual meetings until 7 May 2021. She further explained that the Consultation calls allow the Chief Executive to exercise delegated powers should any decisions be required, which is permissible within the Constitution.
- 5.6 Cllr Salter stated that his preferred option would be hybrid meetings and suggested trialling this for three meetings before reviewing the situation.
- 5.7 The Chair proposed that the meeting on 4 November be a face to face to include a report on the Constitution and hybrid technology.

Resolved:

- 1) That having considered how it wishes to further progress the review of the Scrutiny Function and the options for the holding of future Scrutiny Committee and Consultation Call meetings as set out at paragraph 4.6 of the report the Committee considers a further report on 4 November.

- 2) That the recommendation from the Governance Audit Report be noted.

6. Rail Reform Matters: Responding to the White Paper

- 6.1 Members received the paper from Head of Rail Specification & Delivery who then highlighted the key points within the report.
- 6.2 Members discussed the tensions that exist between decentralisation and greater central control particularly in regard to timetabling and fare setting.

The Head of Rail Specification and Delivery explained that this had been left vague within the White Paper with Great British Railways (GBR) not having complete control of this.

- 6.3 In relation to the four pillars, Cllr Melia highlighted that in some regions such as the Liverpool City Region (LCR) TfN is not the sole voice on these issues and that LCR has its own voice due to having more advanced devolution. She also highlighted a number of successes that the region has had with regard to transport.

The Head of Rail Specification and Delivery explained that his understanding of the White Paper is that already devolved powers would remain unchanged in the city regions.

- 6.4 Members expressed concern regarding the role of Transport of the North as a result of the White Paper and enquired as to the likelihood of a Northern Region of GBR.

The Head of Rail Specification and Delivery commented that in his view this will not necessarily be the case, but if so, it could simplify matters for TfN as the lines of accountability would be clearer.

- 6.5 The Chair commented that he would like to see an arrangement that will monitor, measure and schedule success.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes that Transport for the North's proposed response is based around the four pillars set out in the report.

7. Draft Freight and Logistics Strategy

- 7.1 Members received the report from the Interim Strategy and Programme Director who outlined the key points in the report. He explained that the strategy would go out to public consultation during the Autumn. Members were invited to contact the Principal Policy Officer for Freight and logistics should they wish to provide further comment.

7.2 The Chair commented that he would like to see what the key performance indicators (KPIs) are and how these are to be achieved. He also highlighted the importance of the human resource element of any strategy.

7.3 Cllr Fletcher raised the issue of gauging as well as the Trafford Park freight line.

The Interim Strategy and Programme Director explained that technical work is progressing although until the Integrated Rail Plan is published it is not yet possible to bring in all technical details.

7.4 Cllr Salter commented on the importance of making freight more attractive to small businesses.

The Interim Strategy and Programme Director explained that whilst there is still much work to do in this area, analytical work has been taking place as to where hubs are needed.

7.5 The Chair requested that the Interim Strategy and Programme Director arrange for an expert on freight to be invited to address the committee.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

8. Strategic Transport Plan Development Programme

8.1 The report of the Interim Strategy and Programme Director was received by Members. He then highlighted the salient parts of the report.

He informed Members that the possibility of including a section within the Monthly Operating Report to deal with the Strategic Transport Plan is being explored.

8.2 The Chair commented that a consistent and holistic approach is required.

8.3 The Interim Strategy and Policy Director explained funding for TfN is as yet unclear and that this will be an important issue for the organisation.

On the issue of monitoring and evaluation he explained that a set of metrics has been developed and that it is hoped that the new plan will be ready for adoption in early 2024.

Resolved:

The proposed programme to develop, consult and agree on a new STP by 2024 be noted.

9. Spending Review Planning

- 9.1 Members received the report from the Interim Strategy and Programme Director who then went on to highlight the key parts of the report. He explained that the Chief Executive will be writing to the Department for Transport setting out a positive vision of TfN and the important role that the organisation can play.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

10. Monthly Operating Report

- 10.1 Members received the report from the Interim Strategy and Programme Director who highlighted the key points in the report.

- 10.2 Cllr Parish raised the issue of the Manchester Recovery Taskforce.

The Interim Strategy and Programme Director confirmed that he would provide Cllr Parish with a written response to his question.

Cllr Cooper requested that a report on the Manchester Recovery Task Force be presented to the Committee at a future meeting.

- 10.3 Members raised a number of issues relating to their specific areas.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.