

Transport for the North Board Minutes

Wednesday 29 September 2021

Present:

Cllr Louise Gittins, Cheshire West & Chester (Chair)

Attendee

Cllr Craig Browne
Cllr Keith Little
Cllr Daren Hale
Cllr Charlie Edwards
Cllr Liam Robinson
Cllr Martin Gannon
Cllr Richard Hannigan
Mayor Jamie Driscoll
Cllr Don Mackenzie
Cllr Heather Scott
Cllr Hans Mundry

Local Authority

Cheshire East
Cumbria
Hull
Lancashire
Liverpool City Region
North East Combined Authority
North Lincolnshire
North of Tyne Combined Authority
North Yorkshire
Tees Valley
Warrington

Co-Opted Members

Cllr Charlotte Cupit Derbyshire

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Attendees

Mark Rawstron Lancashire LEP
Matthew Lamb North Yorkshire LEP
Peter Kennan South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined
Authority LEP

Partners in Attendance:

Ben Smith Department for Transport
Lorna Pimlott HS2
David Stones National Highways
Jon Clee Network Rail

Officers in Attendance:

Name

Martin Tugwell
Iain Craven
Paul Kelly
Stephen Hipwell
Julie Openshaw
Peter Molyneux
David Hoggarth
James Lyon

Job Title

Chief Executive
Finance Director
Financial Controller
Head of HR
Head of Legal
Major Roads Director
Strategic Rail Director
Legal Assistant

Item No:**1. Welcome & Apologies**

- 1.1 Cllr Louise Gittins introduced herself as the Acting Chair for Transport for the North Board.
- 1.2 This was the first in-person meeting of Transport for the North Board since March 2020.
- 1.3 Members introduced themselves and apologies were noted, the Chair adding that many Labour Members were at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the last Transport for the North Board call under the temporary legislation to allow such formal meetings to be held virtually on 16 April and the two Chief Executive Consultation Calls on 9 June and 27 July were considered.
- 3.2 The Chair added that due to an issue with MS Teams, the attendees on 27 July had not been recorded and asked Members to advise on their attendance status if they wished it to be recorded.
- 3.3 There were no comments on the Minutes and Cllr Hans Mundry proposed their acceptance, seconded by Cllr Craig Browne.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Transport for the North Board held virtually on 16 April and the Chief Executive Consultation Calls on 9 June and 27 July be approved as a correct record.

4. Governance

- 4.1 The primary matter of Governance was the election of a Chair and Vice-Chairs for TfN Board. Board was advised that the only nominee for Chair was Cllr Louise Gittins and that in order to proceed with the nomination, she would be required to temporarily vacate the Chair during her nomination. Cllr Gittins proposed Cllr Keith Little as the temporary Chair for this item and this was unanimously agreed.
- 4.2 Cllr Keith Little proposed Cllr Louise Gittins as the Chair for both Transport for the North Board and Partnership Board and this was unanimously agreed. Cllr Gittins also takes on the substantive Majority Vice-Chair position, a role which will continue after the appointment of an Independent Chair.
- 4.3 There had been no advance nominations for the position of Minority Vice-Chair, but Cllr Charles Edwards nominated himself commenting that it was important the role was filled immediately, and that the Board operated on a cross-party basis. His election was proposed by Cllr Hans Mundry, seconded by Cllr Don Mackenzie, and agreed unanimously by the Board. The Chair welcomed Cllr Charles Edwards to the role of Minority Vice-Chair.
- 4.4 The remaining matters were to be taken en bloc and Head of Legal covered the topics:
- the appointment of a fourth Independent Member to the Audit & Governance Committee. After a public recruitment process, Graham Bell had been identified as the preferred candidate and the Board was invited to approve his nomination.
 - the appointment of two further Board Members to the vacancies on Audit & Governance Committee and to approve the membership of Transport for the North's Boards and Committees.
 - the approval of the Constitution subject to the amendments set out in Appendices 3, 4 and 5.
 - to approve the annual calendar of meetings for the forthcoming year as required by the Constitution.
- 4.5 The comprehensive overview of the Governance matters was noted, and the Chair invited comments in order.
- 4.6 Cllr Daren Hale advised that both Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire would not approve the current representatives of the Rail North Committee

advising that there had not been a vote for 5 years within the Humber Unitary Authority as to who should represent the Humber which had resulted in both Humber and East Riding having no representation regarding train services in their areas.

He advised that, with no prospect of a devolution deal across the North and South banks of the Humber, a request had been made in writing to TfN for a separate Rail North representative for North and South and had been advised that this was not possible. He requested a review of this decision noting that both the Conservative-run East Riding authority and the Labour-run Hull authority were in agreement on this point.

- 4.7 Cllr Craig Browne requested a point of clarification on item 2.8, the appointment of an Independent Chair querying the exact wording used. It was clarified that the requirement for an Independent Chair of the Partnership Board is being waived until such time as the appointment is made, permitting Cllr Louise Gittins to take the role as Interim Chair.
- 4.8 Cllr Heather Scott raised the issue of Board and Committee meeting venues commenting that the use of Manchester and Leeds venues was challenging for those Members coming from further afield and requesting that TfN consider venues around the north. Mayor Jamie Driscoll agreed with this and the Chair added that the start times of the meetings be considered too for maximum accessibility.

Resolved:

- 1) The Cllr Louise Gittins appointment as Interim Chair and as Majority Vice-Chair be approved.
- 2) That Graham Bell's appointment to the Audit & Governance Committee be approved
- 3) One of the vacancies on Audit & Governance Committee be filled by Cllr Hans Mundry. Two of the vacancies on General Purposes Committee be filled by Peter Kennan and Cllr Liam Robinson.
- 4) That the Rail North Committee representation be deferred until a review had been done into Cllr Daren Hale's request.
- 5) That the calendar of meetings be approved with the proviso that the locations of the meetings be considered.

5. Recruitment of the Transport for the North Board and Partnership Board Chair

- 5.1 Stephen Hipwell covered the report which advised Board that Member Working Group had endorsed the approach to appoint a single Chair for both TfN Board and Partnership Board.

- 5.2 The Board was also asked to approve the recommendation that the rule in the Constitution precluding previously elected Members of the Board applying for the role of Chair be removed.
- 5.3 The role profile and remuneration for the Chair role was discussed with the note that the number of days assigned to the role would rise from 45 days per year to 60 days per year with a commensurate increase in salary.
- 5.4 The proposed Terms of Reference for the appointment panel were noted as being broadly similar to the Terms of Reference used for the appointment panel who managed the recent Chief Executive recruitment process. Nominations for individuals to sit on the Chair appointment panel had already been sought in advance of the Board meeting.
- 5.5 Stephen Hipwell thanked the Board for their approval and advised that the recruitment process would begin week commencing 11 October with the aim to recruit a new Chair in time for the January 2022 meeting of the Board.

Resolved:

- 1) That TfN Board approves the recommendation for a single Chair to be appointed, covering both Transport for the North Board and Partnership Board.
- 2) That TfN Board approves the amendment to the Constitution stated.
- 3) That TfN Board approved the profile, the time and the salary allocated to the role of TfN and Partnership Board Chair.
- 4) That TfN Board approved the Terms of Reference for the Chair appointment panel.

6. Annual Governance Statement, Statement of Accounts Approval and Audit Opinion 2022/21

- 6.1 The context of the Governance and the finance reports was set out by Paul Kelly who noted the extended deadline of 30 September for signing off the accounts; this was expected to revert to the normal deadline of 31 July in 2023.
- 6.2 The Annual Governance Statement is part of the statutory accounts and requires approval as a standalone item. The accounts were published for public inspection on 7 July and no enquiries received. The accounts are subject to regular monitoring by Audit & Governance Committee with a final audit from Mazars, TfN's external auditors who have provided an unqualified draft audit report.

- 6.3 The September meeting of Audit & Governance Committee scrutinised the accounts and recommended, in its Annual Progress Report, that Board approve the Statement of Accounts for 2020/21. Following Board approval, the accounts would be formally signed off and published on the Transport for the North website.
- 6.4 The Chair asked Chris Melling, Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee to take Board through his report of the Committee's activities throughout the year.
- 6.5 Chris Melling described the contents of the report noting the Committee's composition, its Terms of Reference, and its activities. Standing items at the Committee and the areas of TfN's business that were subject to internal audit over the year were noted as per the report.
- 6.6 Chris Melling further advised that the Committee was providing assurance to the Board, via its own work and the reports from RSM, Internal Auditors and Mazars, (TfN's External Auditors), that the necessary core controls expected of a public body are in place and functioning well.
- 6.7 The schedule for the 2021/22 internal audit programme was also set out.
- 6.8 Chris Melling concluded the report with the recommendations:
- The members of the Audit & Governance Committee have indicated that they are content for the Board to approve the corporate governance review and the Annual Governance Statement.
 - The members of the Audit & Governance Committee have indicated that they are content for the Board to note the recommendation in the Annual Progress Report of the Audit & Governance Committee to approve the Statement of Accounts for 2020/21.
 - The members of the Audit & Governance Committee have indicated that they are content for the Board to approve the Statement of Accounts for financial year 2020/21.
- 6.9 Cllr Keith Little, Vice-Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, added his support for the work done by the Committee and his thanks to the Chair.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Corporate Governance Review and the Annual Governance Statement be approved.
- 2) That the recommendation to approve the Accounts be noted.
- 3) That the 2020/21 Accounts be approved.

7. Comprehensive Spending Review Submission

- 7.1 Martin Tugwell referenced both the report and the copy of the letter sent to Department for Transport in advance of their internal deadline to get Spending Review submissions to Government. The focus of the submission was on obtaining a multi-year funding settlement and the work that could be achieved through this.
- 7.2 The submission would form the basis of Transport for the North's 3-year plan which would be brought to Board in November for discussion and debate.
- 7.3 Martin Tugwell further highlighted the increased liaison between all the Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs) and the Department for Transport commenting that DfT were very supportive of the work being done and a further in-year funding grant had been made available to STBs to aid some of the short-term work in progress.
- 7.4 Iain Craven added that the financial ask within the letter was broadly aligned to the previous year and considered both the ambitions of the Members and the overall financial situation.
- 7.5 Extra comment was given to the NPR funding which initially appeared to be considerably lower than the previous year. It was explained that this was a technical point relating to the previous figure which was based on a 4yr period whereas the current ask was based on a 3yr period.
- 7.6 Cllr Hans Mundry highlighted the importance of the ambitions for the north and the funding necessary to deliver them and strongly backed the request for a 3yr funding settlement as critical to setting out a defined work programme as early as possible.
- 7.7 Peter Kennan noted that the initial spending review could be quite restrictive, and he welcomed the ongoing engagement with DfT and their recognition of the importance of STBs. He also suggested that TfN prepare a public statement of their abilities and strengths and the One North message.
- 7.8 Cllr Liam Robinson expressed some disappointment that Liverpool stations were not referenced alongside Manchester, Leeds, and Sheffield in highlighting the importance of rail infrastructure investment and modernisation across the North. He expanded on Peter Kennan's point about One North by commenting on the vital importance that all the Constituent Authorities work together and with TfN to champion the work being done across the north and avoid siloed thinking and working.
- 7.9 Martin Tugwell agreed and commented on the Northern Transport Charter, launched at TfN's Conference the previous week focussing on transport as an enabler in economic regeneration rather than looking at individual schemes. He added that the close work with Network Rail and

National Highways was bringing further benefits in shaping investment plans. Ben Smith offered the support of DfT in ensuring that all relevant departments of Government were engaged in the ongoing work not just of Transport for the North but all the STBs. He further confirmed that DfT had received TfN's Comprehensive Spending Reviews proposals and Treasury would be conducting their appraisals throughout October.

- 7.10 Cllr Daren Hale asked about the possibility of including some early win schemes particularly referencing electrification of rail lines within the Hull corridors. He commented that the levelling-up agenda was not solely concerned with the north-south divide but must include all areas of the North being given fair share as well.
- 7.11 Martin Tugwell acknowledged the comments received and noted TfN's established record of challenging costs and focussing on the outcomes, working with all partners to deliver with the best value for money.

Resolved:

- 1) That TfN Board notes the submission of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

8. Strategic Transport Plan Road Map Development Programme

- 8.1 Martin Tugwell introduced the paper which covered the statutory process of preparing and producing a Statutory Transport Plan. The inaugural plan, produced in 2018, was due a refresh and it was noted that this would be done in parallel with the Independent Economic Review.
- 8.2 Changes due to both external factors such as Covid and new areas of importance such as decarbonisation would shape the revision of the Plan. The key principles behind the plan were outlined in the report and Members were invited to comment on this throughout the process of revising the plan.
- 8.3 Cllr Liam Robinson again referenced his previous point of working across authorities to ensure that the Local Transport Plans tied into TfN's overarching STP and added that the timeline for production in 2024 seemed excessively lengthy, asking if it could be brought forwards. The Chair agreed, asking that November Board consider the timings more closely.
- 8.4 Mark Rawstron commented on the importance of including the business communities, noting that even relatively small transport projects locally could have a big influence on businesses. He requested clarification on the note in the report mentioning the decoupling of decarbonisation from the wider transport agenda adding that he felt this was not a desirable approach. Martin Tugwell explained that, post-Covid, there was a change in travel patterns and there was a need to understand that change in order to best direct resources when building back and looking at

economic regeneration.

- 8.5 Cllr Charlie Edwards welcomed the refresh commenting that the significant changes after the 2019 general election, Brexit and Covid and with the added issue of decarbonisation would require a fresh look at the transport challenges. He asked if it would be possible to map the levelling up and active travel bids from northern councils to align TfN's aspirations with those of authorities and also a list of achievements from the first STP in order to measure the impact of authorities asks of TfN and the deliverables.
- 8.6 The discussion moved onto freight with both Cllr Charlie Edwards and Cllr Daren Hale noting the importance of unified freight links to ports and the importance of these in the decarbonisation agenda. Martin Tugwell referenced TfN's Freight & Logistics Strategy which had been discussed at the previous consultation call and again, the synergy between local authority plans and TfN's overall view was heavily referenced; while TfN might not be a lead partner in delivery, it could provide a linkage and an evidence base when looking at the broader picture across authorities.
- 8.7 Ben Smith agreed that the setting of strategic transport plans remained the top priority for STBs and noted DfT's willingness to work with STBs to facilitate this adding that STBs were in an excellent position to both advise Ministers on local priorities and support local authority capabilities.

Resolved:

- 1) The Board agreed the proposed programme to develop a new STP but requested that the completion date of 2024 be re-examined with the possibility of bringing it forward to 2023. An update on this to be provided at the November Board meeting.

9. Rail Review Reform Matters – Responding to the White Paper

- 9.1 David Hoggarth reminded Board that at the previous discussion on this matter in June 2021, Board had asked TfN to work up a more detailed response to the paper and a case for how the change could be implemented and would work.
- 9.2 The case for change was presented to Board and David Hoggarth advised that it had been reviewed by both Rail North Committee and Scrutiny Committee who had approved the broad approach as set out.
- 9.3 The June meeting of Board had commented on the lack of positive reference in the White Paper to the role of STBs in the future of the rail industry. However, since that meeting, TfN had held constructive discussions with Network Rail and DfT about building on the existing function of Rail North Partnership.

- 9.4 TfN's response had set out the work in four key areas concentrating on TfN's role as a strategic partner in the North of England able to draw on its current and evolving evidence base and as a unified voice for the northern authorities and businesses by combining the views of Members and LEPs.
- 9.5 The previous work and related experience of Rail North Partnership in managing the fallout of the May 2018 timetable change and during Covid was again highlighted as well as aspirations including Smart Ticketing for the north.
- 9.6 Transport for the North presented its vision of working collaboratively with the transition team as Network Rail was absorbed into the new Great British Railways organisation to embed the key aims of the response into the programme of work from its inception and a joint report from Network Rail and TfN as to how this would work was intended for the November meeting of the Board.
- 9.7 Martin Tugwell commented on a recent meeting with senior representatives of Network Rail where they had agreed with this proposal citing the opportunities for earlier completion of some upgrades as a result of TfN's evidence gathering. He further referenced the success of MerseyRail as an example of rail devolution at a local level that had given positive results.
- 9.8 Mayor Jamie Driscoll agreed with the points made noting TfN's ability to bring the issues together in a coherent manner across authorities and he added that connectivity beyond that into Scotland should not be overlooked either.
- 9.9 Mark Rawstron and Peter Kennan picked up on the matter raised in 9.4 asking that TfN's four pillars specifically referenced business more explicitly and the amendment was noted.
- 9.10 Cllr Liam Robinson expanded on the devolution point made in 9.7 asking that the benefits of that be referenced more strongly and also pursued more widely across the north. He expressed concern that the greatest cost to the railways, the leasing of rolling stock, was not referenced in the white paper for potential reform and noted that MerseyRail's practice of direct procurement was a third cheaper and represented far better value for the travelling public.
- 9.11 Cllr Charlie Edwards enquired as to the governance structures within the new GBR organisation and how TfN would fit into that; David Hoggarth replied that this was not currently known but positive dialogue continued with the transition team setting up GBR and that further information would be made available as and when known.

Resolved:

- 1) The recommendations as outlined in the report were agreed by the Board.

10. Rail North Committee Feedback

- 10.1 David Hoggarth updated on the other matters discussed at the recent Rail North Committee meeting including the Manchester area services and infrastructure where good progress had been made on the timetable proposals and the oversight of improvements proposed for the area.
- 10.2 The train operators will be beginning a Phase 2 consultation in autumn 2021 following on from the initial Phase 1 work due to be published imminently and which will focus on the more detailed aspects of the timetable to ensure both reliability and good service levels.
- 10.3 The return to normal service levels following Covid remained under review with service levels and ridership being monitored to assess and respond to demand as it increased. The timetable originally proposed for introduction in May 2022 which would have seen some reductions in service was on hold, potentially until May 2023 while other options were worked through to address the infrastructure issues in the area. Cllr Don Mackenzie thanked TfN for their assistance in this noting that the proposed changes would have meant considerable disadvantage for travellers along the East Coast Main Line especially around Northallerton.
- 10.4 Cllr Daren Hale again referenced the point he made in 4.6 that Hull and the wider Humber and East Riding areas had no representation on the Rail North Committee adding that the authority had found out about some proposed reduction in services purely by chance without any consultation. Cllr Richard Hannigan agreed with the points made adding that the loss of services in the Hull – Bridlington area impacted North Lincolnshire too and was unacceptable.
- 10.5 Cllr Hans Mundry commented that the fixation on the timetable issue was detracting from the major cause of the rail problems in the North, the lack of investment in infrastructure. He acknowledged the short term fixes the timetable changes were designed to address but added that without investment in infrastructure, this situation would continue indefinitely. David Hoggarth noted the points and added that some of the rail service issues were still related to Covid rather than infrastructure; meanwhile the pipeline of proposed infrastructure developments was addressing the investment in facilities.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report of the Strategic Rail Director be noted.

11. Corporate Risk Register Report

11.1 Iain Craven presented the Risk Register, taking the report as read and reminding the Board that this was presented twice-yearly at Board but reviewed as a standing item at every meeting of the Audit & Governance Committee. He further noted the change in format since TfN Board had last reviewed the document.

11.2 Some of the changes to the risks were highlighted and Mayor Jamie Driscoll picked up on the Very High rating of the NPR and IRP risks with a plea to all members to work together and cross-party through political parties in making the case for the best possible outcome to the IRP that served the needs of the whole north.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Corporate Risk Register be noted.

The meeting concluded at 12.45pm.