

Transport for the North Board Minutes

Wednesday 30 March 2022
Hilton Leeds City, Neville Street, Leeds

Present:

Lord McLoughlin (Chair)

Attendee

Cllr Craig Browne
Cllr Louise Gittins
Cllr Claire Holmes
Cllr Andrew Western
Cllr Daren Hale
Cllr Charles Edwards
Cllr Liam Robinson
Cllr Stewart Swinburn
Cllr Don Mackenzie
Mayor Dan Jarvis

Cllr Heather Scott
Mayor Tracy Brabin
Cllr Andy D'Agorne

Local Authority

Cheshire East;
Cheshire West & Chester;
East Riding of Yorkshire;
Greater Manchester Combined Authority;
Hull;
Lancashire;
Liverpool City Region;
North East Lincolnshire;
North Yorkshire;
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined
Authority;
Tees Valley;
West Yorkshire Combined Authority;
York;

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Attendees

Mark Rawstron
Mark Roberts
Matthew Lamb
Peter Kennan

Lancashire LEP
Leeds LEP
North Yorkshire LEP
Sheffield City Region LEP

Partners in Attendance:

Adam Simmons
Rob McIntosh

National Highways
Network Rail

Officers in Attendance:

Name
Martin Tugwell
Gary Rich
Matt Smallwood
Paul Kelly
Tim Foster
Peter Molyneux
Tim Wood
Lucy Hudson

Job Title
Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer
Head of Digital Strategy
Interim Finance Director
Interim Strategy & Programme Director
Major Roads Director
NPR Director
Principal Policy Officer for Freight and
Logistics

Simon McGlone
David Hoggarth

Senior Planning and Strategy Officer
Strategic Rail Director

Item No:

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members present. Apologies were received from Cllrs Keith Little, Martin Gannon, Graeme Miller, Nick Forbes, Mayor Jamie Driscoll, James Newman, Asif Hamid, Lucy Winskell and Mark Thompson.
- 1.2 The Chair stated that having recently taken on the role he would welcome any representations from Members should they have any suggestions as to how the conduct of TfN's business may be improved.
- 1.3 The Chair thanked Cllr Gittins for all her hard work during her time as Interim Chair of the Board. He also thanked those Members who were attending TfN Board for the final time due to their terms of office coming to an end.

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 Board held on 25 January and 23 February 2022 were considered.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Transport for the North Board held on 25 January and the Consultation Call of 23 February 2022 be approved as a correct record.

4. 2022/23 Budget and Business Planning

- 4.1 Members received the report of the Interim Finance Director. Before highlighting the key points in the report the Chief Executive updated the Board on the current position in relation to the budget and Business Planning process.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive stated that the process was progressing based on the steer provided at the February Board Consultation Call: he explained that activities would be prioritised based on the funding available as well as TfN's strategic role.

He highlighted the importance of TfN's statutory role in setting a strategy, one that is underpinned by the regional evidence base. He continued by noting the work required to update the Independent Economic Review, in addition to the update of the Strategic Transport Plan itself, noting how these will be used to shape advice to Government and national agencies in respect of the North's strategic investment programme.

He further highlighted the importance of TfN's analytical team and its contribution at the heart of TfN's work. He emphasised the importance of strengthening relationships with partners such as Network Rail and National Highways, including looking to draw on their knowledge/insight more overtly at times. He also noted that as TfN partners they would be able to draw on TfN's analytical and evidence-based work in this way achieving a consistent/common base-line upon which proposals are developed.

He went on to inform the Board that he was currently prioritising proposed activities and once completed he would undertake an organisational redesign to reflect these activities. The Board was also informed that the window for officers to submit an application for voluntary redundancy was open until 1 April.

The Chief Executive highlighted two risks that the executive was currently managing. The first relates to the Grant Funding Arrangement between TfN and the Department. He stated that progress had been slower than anticipated on this, but he was hopeful that this would be resolved as soon as possible. The second risk relates to the funding settlement being for only a one-year period. Whilst being consistent with how funding has been allocated to local authorities, he noted that for TfN this makes future business planning more difficult; he explained to the Board that he was working with the Department for Transport officials in relation to what might be reasonable planning assumptions beyond the first year.

The Chief Executive informed the Board that he would like to have an informal discussion with Members towards the end of April to update them on progress with the business plan with a view to getting an informal steer before preparing the Budget paper for approval at the June Board.

- 4.3 Members acknowledged the challenging time that TfN is experiencing and thanked officers for their continued hard work.
- 4.4 Mayor Jarvis highlighted the importance of maintaining a focus on the importance of the 'One Voice' remit. In this context he flagged the importance of the Communications and Engagement plan reflecting that remit and objectives for the Chair to be included in order to ensure that there is resource to deliver these important activities.
- Building on Mayor Jarvis's comments Cllr Gittins highlighted the importance of setting SMART targets for the year ahead.
- 4.5 The Chair was supportive of Mayor Jarvis' and Cllr Gittins' comments and emphasised the importance of TfN developing and showing its relevance across the region.
- 4.6 The Chief Executive reiterated that the role of TfN as a statutory body remains unchanged and that he will explore how to ensure that the Business Plan demonstrates added value. He also reiterated that he would look to work with the Board over the course of the summer with a view to identifying opportunities for preparing a proposition for additional activities that could be presented to the Department during the autumn.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board approves the interim budget;
- 2) That Board approves the proposed use of reserves which includes:
 - £0.1m of activity slipped from 2021/22 to 2022/23
 - £0.125m in quarter one 2022/23 to support operating costs. This representing 25% of the previously proposed annual allocation of £0.5m
 - Cost of transition to a new structure anticipated to be incurred in the quarter;
- 3) That Board notes the processes which TfN is following to prepare the business plan and full budget for 2022/23 for consideration by the Board at its June meeting;

- 4) That authority be delegated to the Chief Executive to initiate any time critical activity within the proposed annual budget if it falls within the annualised funding envelope of £7.1m (including 2021/22 slippage and excluding transition costs);
- 5) That Board notes the Outturn report included at Appendix 4.1;
- 6) That Board approves the Annual Treasury Management Strategy as detailed in Appendices 4.2 and 4.3.

5. Integrated Rail Plan Update

- 5.1 Members received the report for the Interim Programme and Strategy Director who highlighted the key points contained within his report.
- 5.2 Members raised a number of issues relating to their constituent areas.
- 5.3 On the issue of co-sponsorship the Board was keen for a robust model to be put into place and emphasised the importance of maintaining a strong voice for the people of the North (via TfN) into the process of delivery. The Board was clear as to the importance of being engaged with the process through the co-sponsorship role but emphasised the need for the North's voice to be heard and listened to.
- Cllr Gittins noted the intention for some of the Sponsorship Board meetings to be held in London and requested that all meetings should be held in the North.
- 5.4 Mr. Mark Rawstron stated that TfN need to be more deliberate and reinforce its messages and get its points across. He added that the voice of business needs to shape those messages given that a key driver for TfN's work is realising the North's economic potential.
- 5.5 Mayor Brabin raised a number of issues including the changes in journey times suggested in the IRP documentation for some trips. She also flagged the importance of TfN's analytical data and the need to undertake a levelling up analysis impact of the IRP versus TfN's preferred choice. Cllr Edwards highlighted the importance of non-NPR schemes not being forgotten.
- 5.6 Mr. Rob McIntosh stated that the IRP opens up near term investment opportunities that will make a difference and that advantage should be taken of those opportunities.
- The Chair agreed with Mr. McIntosh and stated that he and the Chief Executive had recently met with Sir Peter Hendy and Mr. Andrew Haines. He emphasised the importance of working together with Network Rail and of recognising that major investment proposals go through a process of evolution as their detail is developed.
- 5.7 The Chief Executive emphasised that under the co-sponsorship arrangement TfN retains the ability to provide statutory advice to government (over and above its input through the co-sponsorship Board), which protects and respects the role of the Board. He was positive about TfN's role within the Sponsorship Board, stating that it allows TfN the opportunity to work with DfT to address issues jointly. In particular he noted that TfN's technical capabilities provides the basis for some of those issues. /He further stated that Board as owner of the Strategic Transport Plan needs to keep an oversight of the work being done through the co-sponsorship Board in order to pick up linkages to other parts of the region not directly covered by the IRP, as these connections are important.
- He stressed the importance of the individual Programme Boards associated with specific schemes and the need for these to have a local input.

5.8 In response to the question on the role of evidence and data, the Interim Programme and Strategy Director stated that this could not be confirmed until the Grant Funding Agreement has been finalised. He explained that the fundamental principal in the discussions with the DfT so far is the importance of a shared/consistent base-line.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board agrees to the co-sponsorship arrangements as set out in Section 4 of the report and agrees the key priorities for TfN in 2022/23 as outlined in Section 6.
- 2) That Board notes the arrangements being agreed for continued analytical support to be provided by TfN to the NPR Programme.

6. Approval of the Freight and Logistics Strategy

- 6.1 Members received the report from the Principal Policy Officer for Freight and Logistics who highlighted the key points of the report.
- 6.2 The Board urged the executive to work closely with the freight industry in order that the importance of freight is better reflected moving forward.
- 6.3 Mr. Mark Roberts highlighted the importance of freight and decarbonisation to business. He stated that the comments made during the consultation need to be translated, where possible, into resource and support and he believed that the private sector through the LEPs and businesses would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the executive on implementing the Strategy.

Mr. Peter Kennan raised the issue of engagement with small and medium sized enterprises and asked that be given consideration during the development of the action plans.

- 6.4 Cllr Hale highlighted the private ownership of many of the gateway ports and observed that in order for them to make investments they would want to see binding targets for decarbonising the freight sector from Government.

Mayor Brabin stated that the M62 is one of the most congested roads East to West for freight and believes that this is an opportunity for more freight to be moved by rail. She also highlighted Network Rail's plans on the raising of bridge heights to accommodate freight movements. On the issues of low liner wagons, she asked if there had been any further discussions around whether this is considered as the cheaper option.

- 6.5 Mr. Adam Simmons welcomed the multi modal approach on freight and stated that National Highways would continue to work with TfN on this. He also highlighted the work that National Highways already does with Network Rail on the issue of bridge clearances.

- 6.6 On the issue of freight moving to rail the Principal Policy Officer for Freight and Logistics highlighted how through the Strategy the North is leading the way on developing additional rail freight journeys. On the issue of low line wagons, she explained that TfN's approach should be presenting the case for W12 gauge enhancements on the core parts of the network for rail freight. She also stated that further research was needed on the issue of weakened bridges which was a question raised through Scrutiny.

Resolved:

That the Board notes the progress to date, including the outcome of the consultation and the comments from Scrutiny Committee and that it formally adopts the Freight and Logistics Strategy.

7. A Northern Digital Mobility Strategy

7.1 Members received the report and presentation from the Head of Digital Strategy who highlighted the key elements of the report.

7.2 Members were supportive of this work and believe that this may help with modal shift.

Concerns were however raised about potential inequalities within communities arising from digital exclusion and the Board was keen that a recommendation be made to Government that more needs to be done to ensure digital networks are required to work with TfN in order to support delivery of digitally enabled/dependent transport services.

7.3 Cllr Browne brought to the Board's attention a demand responsive transport scheme in Cheshire East. The three-year pilot is looking to address social exclusion in the areas most rurally isolated communities. He stated that he would be happy to share with TfN their experience on addressing the issue of rural isolation.

Resolved:

That Board agrees to the scope and objectives of the Northern Digital Mobility Strategy.

8. Rail North Committee Update

8.1 Members received the update report following the Rail North Committee meeting on 15 March. Cllr Robinson (Rail North Committee Chair) and the Strategic Rail Director updated the Board on the key discussions from the meeting.

8.2 Members expressed their deep dissatisfaction with the proposed cuts to Northern services (from the May 2022 timetable change) despite the strong rail bounce back and believe that such cuts hinder levelling up.

8.3 Mayor Brabin asked what has been done to engage Ministers and what more can be done. She requested that the Chair makes representation to Government asking them to have conversations with the operators.

Mr. Kennan supported the planned meeting with the Minister and requested that before such a meeting takes place other train operators are spoken to, to ensure all the issues are captured.

8.4 Mayor Jarvis stated that he has raised his concerns with the Transport Minister and Northern directly. He stated that the cuts will directly impact on the lives of people and highlighted a specific example which illustrated how people make choices about their lives on the basis of the train service that they thought would be available.

8.5 Cllr Edwards highlighted the issue of "on the day" cancellations and believes this maybe a loophole for operators to reduce the timetable and services "via the back door". He suggested that this issue is raised with the Government so that this loophole can be removed.

- 8.6 The Chair stated that reliability of public transport is vital and if this is not the case it discourages people from using it. He informed the Board that he would look to meet with the Transport Minister to raise the Board's concerns.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted;
- 2) That Board endorse the Rail North Committee seeking an urgent discussion with the Rail Minister to address the implications for users and the economy of reduced service levels and increases in travel costs arising from wider economic pressures.

9. Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI)

- 9.1 Members received the report from Senior Planning & Strategy Office who highlighted the key aspects of the report.

- 9.2 Cllr Hale stated the importance of consistency of charging delivery across the region, for both urban and more sparsely populated areas. As well as the importance of considering charging needs at home alongside charging needs on the move, and at the end of journeys. Without this whole network view of journeys, people will not consider buying electric vehicles.

He also raised the issue of poorer areas which see a higher proportion of older fossil fueled vehicles because they are more affordable and therefore a market led approach to EV uptake may leave some places behind.

- 9.3 Cllr Browne highlighted the challenge faced by members undertaking applications for public funding to deliver the requirements identified by TfN's evidence. Noting that many constituent Members are in the same position on this issue, he asked what TfN might do to support constituent authorities and how it might engage with the commercial sector. He suggested TfN could lead on a pan northern procurement framework, which constituent members could call on to support deliver of EV charging networks, in order to benefit from economies of scale.

The Board was supportive of the suggestion of a pan-Northern procurement framework and critical that authorities are required to bid for funding for national infrastructure.

- 9.4 Cllr Robinson welcomed a framework of evidence completed on a regional footprint which accounts for user travel across a wider spatial area. The ability to understand the capacity of the electricity grid, and whether the energy mix across the North will support EV uptake was also welcomed.

- 9.5 Members were keen to stress that whilst the move to electric vehicles is important to achieving net zero, it is only one component aspect, and modal shift, active travel and other solutions also need to be encouraged and considered.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Board supports the approach taken to build a regional evidence base to support vehicle fleet decarbonisation and local decision making
- 2) The Board notes the capabilities and example findings now available to understand and communicate the regions EV charging infrastructure requirements.
- 3) The Board supports our intended next steps to communicate, apply and advance the EVCI framework in conjunction with our regional EV Steering Group.

10. Governance Report

- 10.1 The report of the Head of Legal Service was received by Members and the Chief Executive outlined the key points within the report.
- 10.2 Cllr Scott confirmed that Mayor Houchen and herself will be the representatives for Tees Valley for the General Purpose Committee.
- 10.3 The Chief Executive stated that Cllr Hale has been nominated as the General Purposes Committee for North of the Humber.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board confirms the Humber region shall be permitted to have two Members on General Purposes Committee, one for the North of The Humber and the other for the South of The Humber;
 - 2) Board received nominations and appointed accordingly the Members and Substitute Members for the remaining seats on General Purpose Committee;
 - 3) That Board confirms the Terms of Reference for the General Purposes Committee Consultation as set out in paragraph 3.2;
 - 4) That Board notes the Review of the Scrutiny Committee and accepts its conclusions.
- 10.4 At the end of the meeting the Northern Powerhouse Director presented a short overview of the achievements of the Programme since it started.