

Scrutiny Committee Minutes

**Tuesday 05 September 2023
Virtual**

Present:

Attendee	Local Authority
Cllr Paul Haslam (Chair)	North Yorkshire;
Cllr James Shorrock	Blackburn with Darwen;
Cllr John Boughton	Blackpool;
Cllr Rod Fletcher	Cheshire East;
Cllr Andrew Cooper	Cheshire West & Chester;
Cllr Roger Dobson	Cumberland;
Cllr Tony Markley	Cumberland;
Cllr Leo Hammond	East Riding of Yorkshire;
Cllr Matthew Salter	Lancashire;
Cllr Damian O'Connor	Liverpool City Region;
Cllr Margaret Meling	North East Combined Authority;
Cllr Oliver Freeston	North East Lincolnshire;
Cllr John Davison	North Lincolnshire;
Cllr Kevin Osborne	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority;
Cllr Steve Parish	Warrington;
Cllr Andy Connell	Westmorland and Furness;
Cllr Rachel Melly	York;

Officers in Attendance:

Name	Job Title
Gary Rich	Democratic Services Officer
Katie Day	Director of Strategy, Analysis and Communications
Julie Openshaw	Head of Legal
Lucy Jacques	Acting Head of Strategy and Policy
Darren Oldham	Rail and Road Director
Joanne Barclay	Senior Solicitor

Item No:

1 Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all in attendance and informed Members that the meeting is being streamed live. Apologies were received from Cllrs Kaushik, Furley and Burton.

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 held on 1 June 2023 were considered and their accuracy as a correct record confirmed. The minutes were proposed by Cllr Davison and seconded by Cllr Connell.

3.2 The Chair stated that there was one matter arising from the previous minutes, namely the election of the minority party Vice Chair, but this item has been deferred.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2023 be noted as a true and accurate record.

4 Strategic Transport Plan Update

4.1 Members received the report and presentation from the Acting Head of Strategy and Policy who highlighted the key points of the presentation. She talked the Committee through the first few slides and paused to gather the Committee's feedback on the numbers who engaged in the consultation.

4.2 Cllr Dobson asked about the geographical breakdown of those who had participated in the consultation.

The Acting Head of Strategy and Policy explained that this will be part of the further analysis that is taking place and this breakdown will only be available for those that participated in the virtual consultation room. She explained that during the consultation demographic information was monitored in order that activities could be targeted at under represented or harder to engage groups.

4.3 Cllr Parish expressed disappointment that only 9 MPs from across the North had participated.

The Director of Strategy, Analysis and Communications explained that all Northern MPs from the all party parliamentary group were invited to participate in a drop in session. Of the 9 who attended there was a good geographical split from across the North. She further explained that separate briefings and materials were provided as well as it being promoted through other channels.

The Committee was informed that there had been an excellent level of response from the Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and that there had been significant engagement through various local groups and committees. Additionally, she noted that the numbers who engaged in the consultation

were comparable to the numbers who have participated in consultations for other Sub-national Transport Bodies.

- 4.4 Cllr Davison was disappointed with the numbers who participated and asked how many were members of the general public as opposed to other stakeholders.

The Director of Strategy, Analysis and Communications confirmed that 220 members of the public took part in the citizens' panel and 94 responded via e-mail or letters. She explained that the challenge with this work is who the plan is written for. She stated that it is written at a strategic level so that it can support and guide the work of LTAs, as well as be provided as statutory advice to the Secretary of State on the outcomes and the ambitions for the region. With this taken into consideration she was satisfied with the number of people who had responded.

- 4.5 Cllr Salter commented that the consultation gives the impression that there should be a move towards reducing car travel which may be viewed in a negative light by the public. He added that whilst the information is useful the views expressed cannot be taken as representative of all of the public.

- 4.6 The Acting Head of Strategy and Policy then highlighted some of the key themes that emerged from the consultation.

- 4.7 The Chair focussed on the lack of ambition theme. He addressed the issue of carbon net zero and the perception that it is not ambitious enough, with which he agrees. He also raised the issues of air quality, health and wellbeing, the importance of finding other fuel types, making public transport affordable, freight and how it is moved around, and spending on public transport in the North of England compared to the South of England.

- 4.8 On the issue of freight Cllr Hornby cautioned that there needs to be a careful balance on how freight works across different locations. She highlighted the impact that freight may have on communities and specifically where it goes through residential areas. She requested that best practice on freight development that will reduce the burden on residents be included.

- 4.9 Cllr Salter stated that not enough is being made of existing TfN work on things like freight and hydrogen and that more attention should be given to this. Cllr Salter agreed that there is a lack of ambition but believes that the fault for this lies with lack of enthusiasm from central government rather than with TfN.

- 4.10 Cllr Melly expected to see more on buses and echoed the comments of other Members about affordability. She also stressed the importance of there being services available between major towns and cities in the North. She suggested that all aspects of transport, how they're integrated, whether they are affordable, availability and whether the services exist and where there

are gaps should be included. Cllr Davison highlighted the difference between urban and rural bus services and the difficulties in providing services in rural areas.

- 4.11 On the issue of electric vehicles Cllr Markley highlighted the difficulties that small businesses will have switching to electric. He stated that smaller haulage companies would need to have their vehicles working 24 hours a day in order to justify the investment; this he believes will not be possible with electric vehicles due to the amount of time they take to charge.
- 4.12 Cllr Fletcher raised the issue of funding and the fact that it is constantly being cut for public transport. He stated that traffic needs to be taken off roads and put on rail but this is difficult due to the lack of capacity.
- 4.13 In response the Director of Strategy, Analysis and Communications addressed a number of the issues raised by the Committee.

On air quality and health and wellbeing and it being linked into TfN's ambition on decarbonisation, she stated that is a key message that came out through the consultation and TfN is keen to look at that narrative and the health benefits that come with decarbonisation.

Regarding freight, she explained that the STP is intended to set the long-term outcomes and ambitions that are wanted for the North of England as it is statutory advice. Therefore, the plan needs to look at what is needed from the Northern transport network to enable the effective movement of freight and logistics. She stated that some quick wins need to be explored that will move more freight off the road and on to rail.

On the issue of funding, she stated that this is a central issue and is why one of the ambitions in the plan is an economic ambition, and the level of funding needed to unlock the economic potential in the North of England.

Addressing the rural issue, she noted that over 95% of journeys are made on roads and in some rural areas there is no access to rail; therefore, there is a need to make sure that the roads function for good effective public transport as well. She stated that the STP is geared around thinking about people and places because no two places are the same, and no two people are the same.

- 4.14 The Rail and Road Director addressed the issue of buses and informed the Committee that TfN recognises that this is an area where we need do more work. He explained that there seems to be universal support for TfN to be a facilitator in this area. He noted a number of areas that the Partnership Board had highlighted where they would like TfN to support them. These are: helping authorities across the North to share best practice, rural bus services and social connectivity and TfN acting as a facilitator for purchasing

buses. He stated that over the next 12 months Members will see a significant change in how TfN communicates on bus activity.

- 4.15 In summarising the Chair stated that the Committee is supportive of the work that has been done although it believes there is more room for ambition. Specifically, there needs to be a focus on fuelling options, freight, public transport (particularly buses) but this needs to be place specific and how the ambition will be funded.
- 4.16 The Acting Head of Strategy and Policy and the Director of Strategy, Analysis and Communications then outlined the work undertaken with the Citizens' Panel and the next steps that need to be taken.
- 4.17 The Chair encouraged the Committee to share the report and the presentation with colleagues in their constituent authorities.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the outcomes from the statutory consultation;
- 2) That the feedback provided on areas of the plan to revise post consultation be noted;
- 3) That the Committee notes the arrangements for finalising the plan with the TfN Board in December.

5 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 21 November
11am