



To: Business Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)

Date: 2nd November 2016

Subject: Coventry Rail Story / Rail Investment Strategy

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) with a brief guide to the background and current context of the Coventry Rail Story (also referred to as Rail Investment Strategy) to inform the Board's Select Committee meeting on 15th February 2017.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
- i) Note the contents of the report.
 - ii) Identify focussed key lines of enquiry for the Board's Select Committee meeting on 15th February 2017.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 Coventry has been historically overlooked by the rail industry in formal investment and planning strategies, despite record passenger growth in the city in recent years. Passenger numbers using Coventry station increased by 179% between 2001 and 2015 to 6.25 million annually – twice the national average growth of 90% and making Coventry the fastest growing railway station in the UK outside London. Passenger numbers are forecast to reach 10.8 million a year by 2043.
- 3.2 In 2013, the Council developed an evidence base that set out the rail interventions and investments that would support Coventry's economic growth. Initially called the Coventry Rail Story, it has evolved into a Rail Investment Strategy for the Council. It sets out the Council's ambitions to enhance local and long distance rail connectivity and identifies where capacity improvements are required to meet the increasing demand for rail services.

4 Current rail priorities and interventions

4.1 NUCKLE

- 4.1.1 Encouraging growth along the north-south economic corridor covering Nuneaton, Bedworth, Coventry, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa is a key part of the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP's economic plan. The Council, in partnership with Warwickshire County Council and Transport for West Midlands, has developed NUCKLE, a scheme to upgrade the rail link along the corridor. The project is being delivered in a number of distinct phases.

- 4.1.2 NUCKLE 1 involves upgrading the Coventry to Nuneaton line with the aspiration to upgrade service frequency from hourly to half hourly. As part of NUCKLE 1.1, new stations were built and opened at Coventry (Ricoh) Arena and Bermuda Park in Warwickshire and existing platforms at Bedworth station extended to accommodate longer three-car trains.
- 4.1.3 A new bay platform will be built at Coventry station as part of NUCKLE 1.2 to accommodate increased service frequencies from Nuneaton. Work on this is expected to commence in 2017, with preparatory works currently being undertaken as a standalone project, providing improved access around the west of the station.
- 4.1.4 NUCKLE 2 will deliver improvements to the Coventry to Leamington Spa line. Warwickshire County Council has already secured a £5 million funding contribution from Network Rail to construct a new station at Kenilworth.
- 4.1.5 Rail services along the upgraded Coventry to Nuneaton line are proposed to be operated by new rolling stock currently being developed by Vivarail Ltd in partnership with the City Council, Warwickshire County Council, WMCA, the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership and London Midland. A trial of the new three-car Class 230 'D-Trains' between Coventry and Nuneaton is currently being developed by the partners.

4.2 Coventry Station Masterplan

- 4.2.1 Coventry station is experiencing record growth in passenger numbers and is one of the busiest stations on the West Coast Main Line after London Euston and Birmingham New Street. And yet since the station was built in 1962, it has seen very little investment or updating.
- 4.2.2 To address this, the Coventry Station Masterplan was approved by Cabinet in March 2015. It aims to deliver transformational improvement to Coventry station and will support the wider regeneration and connectivity of the Friargate development. The Masterplan proposal seeks to deliver new capacity and accessibility within the station through the provision of a new footbridge between platforms; a new station building; replacement/additional car parking and passenger drop off facilities and a new high quality public transport interchange.
- 4.2.3 To date, the focus of implementation of the Masterplan has been on design optioneering and completion of concept designs. The emphasis has been on high quality design which respects the heritage of the existing Grade 2 listed building.
- 4.2.4 Construction of the first phase of works has commenced on a pedestrian access under Warwick Road and progress is being made on the delivery of NUCKLE 1.2 that will support the Masterplan scheme.
- 4.2.5 An external funding package is being sought to deliver the remaining aspects of the Station Masterplan which could include Growth Deal, Integrated Transport Block and Devolution Deal.

4.3 Long distance rail connectivity

- 4.3.1 London and Birmingham notwithstanding, Coventry's rail connectivity to other areas of the country is relatively poor for a city of its size. The Rail Story identifies that significant economic benefits could be realised through better connectivity between Coventry and the North East and the East Midlands.
- 4.3.2 There are currently 3 fast trains per hour to London Euston from Coventry. With the proposed opening of HS2, there will be a major reorganisation of services along the West Coast Main Line in 2026 which could significantly affect Coventry's rail connectivity.

- 4.3.3 Maintaining good connectivity with London is vital to Coventry's economic competitiveness. The Council would deem any material reduction in fast/express service provision to London as unacceptable. A reduction to 2 fast trains per hour to London would only be acceptable if both journey time reductions and connectivity to other new destinations were coherently planned and delivered.
- 4.3.4 The Council is supporting proposals to reroute an existing Cross Country train service through Coventry to improve connectivity to new and existing destinations in the north and on the south coast.

4.4 Connectivity to HS2

- 4.4.1 Coventry is actively seeking the provision of fast connectivity between the city and the proposed HS2 Interchange station adjacent to Birmingham Airport and the NEC. Proposals for future HS2 phases would see extensions from Birmingham to Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and the East Midlands, affording the opportunity for Coventry to significantly improve its rail connectivity to the north through HS2. The Council is actively engaged in the development of the proposals at

4.5 Local and regional rail connectivity

- 4.6 Rail connectivity between Coventry and the rest of the West Midlands will be impacted by the introduction of HS2 and reorganisation of West Coast Mail Line services. Coventry is actively engaging the Department for Transport to ensure the city achieves the maximum benefit from changes to local rail connectivity post-HS2.
- 4.7 As part of the WMCA and Midlands Engine, a strategic transport strategy is being developed for the East and West Midlands area called Midlands Connect. The strategy is looking at ways of improving the strategic rail and road networks to support economic growth objectives. The City Council is fully engaged in the development of that strategy by ensuring that Coventry's rail strategy is embedded within it.
- 4.8 As part of the refranchising process, from October 2017 the Department for Transport is supporting the devolution of the West Midlands rail franchise, currently held by London Midland, to be operated as a separate limited company. This franchise operation will be governed through a new umbrella organisation called West Midlands Rail Limited (WMR) which is made up of a partnership of fourteen Metropolitan District, Shire and Unitary local transport authorities that cover the proposed map of the devolved rail services. WMR will give partner Authorities, including Coventry, greater control and influence over future franchises, such as timetabling and quality of services, with the aim of improving regional and local rail connections.

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