Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) held at 9.30 am on Wednesday, 15 February 2017

Present:

Members: Councillor J McNicholas (Chair)

                                  Councillor G Crookes (substitute for Councillor Birdi)
                                  Councillor M Hammon
                                  Councillor L Kelly (substitute for Councillor Lucas)
                                  Councillor R Lancaster
                                  Councillor T Mayer
                                  Councillor C Miks (substitute for Councillor Brown)
                                  Councillor H Sweet

Other Representatives: David Beer, Passenger Focus
                                  Peter Bond, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM)
                                  Steve Burd, Stagecoach
                                  Martin Hancock, National Express
                                  Bridget Harper, Coventry Older Voices
                                  Jon Hayes, TfWM
                                  Malcolm Holmes, TfWM
                                  Toby Rackliff, TfWM

Employees:

                                  S Bennett, Resources Directorate
                                  C Coyle, Place Directorate
                                  G Holmes, Resources Directorate
                                  A Hook, Chief Executive's Directorate
                                  C Knight, Place Directorate
                                  L Knight, Resources Directorate
                                  C Sinclair, Resources Directorate

Apologies: Councillors J Birdi, R Brown, J Innes (Cabinet Member),
                                  A Lucas, J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member) and D Welsh (Deputy
                                  Cabinet Member)

Public Business

43.   **Declarations of Interest**

        There were no declarations of interest.

44.   **Select Committee on Public Transport**

        The Scrutiny Board met in Select Committee style to consider the following key
        lines of enquiry:-

              1) How can train connectivity support economic development and
                  business growth in the city?

2) How can we improve the bus service in the city?

3) What are the key accessibility issues for public transport in the city, and how can they be addressed?

A number of outside representatives attended the meeting, gave evidence and responded to Members' questions.

Notes from the meeting, providing details of the matters discussed, are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

The Scrutiny Board noted that a further informal meeting would be arranged to identify any actions and recommendations arising from this Select Committee and these would be presented to the Board at their next meeting for approval.

Appendix

Session 1 – How can train connectivity support economic development and business growth in the city?

The Board received a presentation from Toby Rackliff, Rail Strategy Manager, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) on rail transport and growth in the West Midlands. The presentation referred to the evolving geography of the West Midlands including the Combined Authority and was part of the Midlands Connect Partnership. Information was provided on the national picture highlighting that rail enhanced the productive potential of the economy by up to £11.3b per year. West Midlands rail passengers had increased by 135% since 2000 and over 70% in the last 10 years. The recent growth in passenger number for individual stations was also detailed - for 2014/15 to 2015/16 Coventry had seen a 10.7% increase, Tile Hill 15.7% and Canley 19.4%. Growth in rail trips both in and out of the city were compared to the numbers for car and bus trips.

The presentation focussed on rail development proposals for 2016-21 as follows:
*   Longer trains and greater capacity on all franchise through the WMCA
*   Improved passenger capacity and capability at key stations including Coventry
*   Completing Midlands Rail Hub
*   New stations and local services to improve regional rail connectivity to maximise benefits of HS2 (including Kenilworth to Leamington)

Information was provided on how HS2 would release and facilitate improved connectivity, with journey times from Coventry station being highlighted. Midland Connect options were also detailed which included proposals for increased local services and additional freight between Coventry, Kenilworth and Leamington and a Nuneaton flyover or drive under to facilitate direct and faster services between Coventry and Leicester.
The presentation concluded with short term options for improved network capacity and freight capability.

A further presentation was provided by Malcolm Holmes, Programme Director, TfWW on West Midlands Rail Devolution. The presentation provided an understanding of West Midlands Rail Ltd, which was a partnership of Local Authorities including the WMCA. Directors were senior elected members and LEP representatives attended Board meetings.
The economic value of rail was highlighted with tens of thousands of people using rail each day to access jobs. Current problems with the existing system were set out and included local influence on rail service was limited; it was difficult to effect change and develop new services; and key decisions were currently made in Westminster.
West Midlands Rail objectives were outlined as increasing local influence over the rail network through:
*   Strong role in the specification and procurement of the 2017 West Midlands franchise
*   A role in the specification of other franchises that operate in the region
*   Leading the local management of the franchise
*   A fully devolved West Midlands franchise.

The franchise was due to start on 15th October, 2017. Two bids had been submitted from Avellio and Govia and evaluation was underway. The award would be made in June. Information was provided on the major benefits which included a Business Unit dedicated to the West Midlands; a brand; a service quality regime; capacity; increased Sunday/evening service frequencies; and new services.

The presentation concluded drawing attention to the positive of creating a network that delivered for passengers as follows:
- West Midlands Rail was a developing body with growing influence
- Building strong partnerships
- Real influence with DfT and franchise management responsibility
- Exciting plans for future network development.

Colin Knight, Assistant Director, Transport and Highways gave a brief overview of current issues highlighting that funding was already available for the West Midlands Rail Hub which, in due course, would free up rail paths to the benefit of Coventry passengers. He referred to the strategic transport strategy being developed for the East and West Midlands area called Midlands Connect. Coventry's rail strategy would be embedded in this and priorities included in the Strategy document would include proposals for Coventry to Leicester and Coventry to Leamington.

Three years ago Coventry commissioned the Coventry Rail Story making the case as to why the railways were important to the local economy. It set out the Council's ambitions to enhance local and long distance rail connectivity and identified where capacity enhancements were required to meet increasing demand for rail services. The Council adopted this rail strategy. A number of other Local Authorities had now followed suit.

Reference was made to the Station Master Plan which aimed to improve Coventry Railway Station and for the importance of Knuckle and building the bay platform at Coventry Station were highlighted. There were lots of positives challenges to be faced to support economic development and business growth in the city.

The Board raised a number of questions in response to the presentations and responses were provided, matters raised included:
- How would the provision of a train station in Kenilworth be of benefit to passengers at Tile Hill Station when most passengers were travelling to Birmingham
- The importance of the availability of data relating to the modes of transport used by train passengers to arrive at the Coventry train stations
- What steps were being taken to mitigate the impact on local residents of the 15% increase of passengers using Tile Hill and Canley stations
- The suggestion of using other local authority areas as examples of best practice eg York Ring and Ride
- Why couldn't proposals for additional trains be introduced immediately
- The current position relating to the electrification of the Coventry Nuneaton line
- Support for the proposals for branding but, in light of the all the different organisations involved in rail services, the requirement for members of the public to be aware of who was accountable for what

- What was happening with the proposals to increase the West Midlands rail track
- The implications of HS2 on the Coventry to London Euston route and how were Coventry commuters expected to benefit from HS2
- Would there be a central link to improve rail freight
- Following the opening of the Knuckle station at the Ricoh, were we on schedule to meet usage targets and information on the service level agreement
- Concerns about any potential charging at the rail park and ride sites at Canley and Tile Hill and the implications for residents in light of increasing usage of these stations
- Concerns about the scheduling and timing of train services from Canley to Birmingham and how could the issues around long waits caused by delays and cancellations be addressed
- The potential for light rail to be introduced in Coventry
- The length of rail franchise agreements and what was done to protect services when things started to fail
- The position relating to Virgin Trains and why the operator was so influential
- The latest position relating to the importance of securing rail links between Europe and the West Midlands and, in particular, having HS2 linking to St Pancras, and the need to secure the support of MPs to lobby for this.

Session 2 - How can we improve bus services in the city?

Statements

David Beer (Passenger Focus)
- Improving punctuality/satisfaction with waiting time are key.
- Can be disrupted by increased congestion.
- Interventions to identify are important.
- Improvements: real-time information, improving value for money, making system simple to understand – especially for young people and commuters.
- Wider engagement with passengers – monitoring satisfaction and acting on results.
- Major point is congestion issues – these are key focus inputting into West Midlands Alliance.

Martin Hancock (NXMids)
- Gave stats for bus use: 150 on road, 23m per annum, 0.5m per week, single city centre garage, 450 staff, high percentage are Coventry residents.
- Investing in fleet and ticketing – multi operating ticketing is vital. Worried that emphasis on west midlands rail doesn't relate to journey patterns experienced. Concerns regarding slow introduction of 'Swift' card by rail operator.
- We will be moving quickly to contactless ticketing.
- Short term challenge is road works and how to manage them
- Long term challenge is bus access to new developments
- It's about keeping buses moving quickly (referred to Eastern Green and 'Amazon' developments)

Pete Bonds (TfWM)
- 83% public transport are bus journeys. Coventry is only city that bucks the trend which is passenger decline.
- Strong bus services are linked to strong economies.
- Bus industry is impacted so many factors – the Alliance try and understand that.
- Aims: smart/contactless commitment, safe and secure network, air quality, identity and how they work together.
- Network development plans are fundamental to the Alliance. What are the transport patterns and how do we get integrated network to support that?
- Punctuality is a key issue nationwide. 83% underinvested compared to rail. Reduction of punctuality equals reduction of patronage.

Steve Burd (Stagecoach)
- Punctuality is key issue for key operators. If you slow down punctuality you'll drive passengers away.
- Worsening traffic congestion. Costs c260k per annum to keep buses running on time. Could be better spent.
- The single thing the local authority can do is to give buses greater priority – bus lanes, junction changes, design of new developments – many parts of city are physically impossible to access by buses.

- Ask that new developments have a spine road though them.
- Other problem areas are off-peak demographic and changes relating the growth of internet shopping.

John Hayes (Transport West Mids)
- We work with Highways Agency, highways authority etc. Encouraging use of bus through road works to keep traffic down.

Bridget Harper (Coventry Older Voices)
- Bus stops are stressful for older people and those with disabilities.
- Punctuality is crucial
- Important to have access to health services (UHCW)
- Need to feel safe – waiting at bus stop in dark, women travelling in the evening
- Like the concept of real-time information, but not always accessible to older people / visually impaired.
- If older people cannot access, they may become isolated and that would impact on health services.

Chair – bear in mind issues for younger people

Member Questions

Cllr Sweet – possibility of speaker at bus stop?
   Answer: signing up to RNIB charter. Rolling out audio-visual on buses. Being active around talking bus stops (use of key fob).

Cllr Sweet – Kings Hill/Keresley. Need forward thinking. When it comes to planning, can access cul-de-sac be sorted?
   Answer: It's key that discussions with developers are penetrated right at the start.
   Looking at Kings Hill, have had conversation with Warwickshire. Need for transport system is paramount. Spine road is already there at Keresley. Eastern Green, gone back for further work.

Cllr Lancaster – how do you feel about removal of bus lanes? Journey times? Customer satisfaction? Air quality? How to comment? Ticketing?
   Answers: re congestion, satisfaction levels for weekends and off peak are the same level of dissatisfaction.
   Alliance have highways around the table so all have access to CCTV etc.
   Re Bus Lanes – early days regarding impact. Alliance are looking at satisfaction/punctuality. Good opportunity to see what we should be providing. The whole route is important. Introducing selective vehicle detection which will help with analysis. Assessing at the end of the trial is paramount.
   Re: Air Quality – mix of vehicle types. Mainly diesel, looking at hybrids. Electric not suitable in inter-urban routes.
   Re: Comments – complaints should go direct to operator. TfWM: have a route and methodology to field out and deal with complaints – one stop shop for customer.
   Re: ticketing – multi mobile network tickets – migrate network onto 'Swift'. Live trial in the coming months. Working with new rail franchise post-October.
   Journey patterns are changing. Need to look at futuristically.

Cllr Crookes – route near his home not near station. Takes 5 times as long, not full. Buses not stopping at request stops for those who are partially sighted.
  Buses would be used more if there were direct buses to some places – hubs?
  Answers: trying to build network in suburbs. Main destinations are City Centre, hospital and university.
  It's a trade-off. Route has to get enough passengers to cover costs. Operators try to create cross-city services – we need to strike a balance.

Cllr Kelly – bus shelters, safety in the evening (including young people), don't know location travelling at night.
  Answers: Acknowleged bus shelters are contentious, but welcomed by passengers that use them. We look to have them located away from houses where possible.
  Have young person representative on the Alliance. Gave example of some young-people friendly buses in Reading.
  Have safe travel policing and interface with British Transport Police. It's about reassurance, visability and data-led.

Cllr Hammon – Bendy buses, empty buses, when will swift card be available? subsidy?
  Answers: Re: Swift card – already exists, Re: Subsidy – no subsidy (explained in detail)

Cllr Miks – safety of women travelling, unclean buses, better use of Binley Rd, buses to hospital
  Answers:
  Re: buses to hospital – hope to get 2nd entrance to hospital. Acknowledged it is difficult for everyone.
  Re: safety – reported some antisocial behaviour on some routes, these can be pin pointed and addressed. Evidence that younger people are feeling more unsafe on buses (from other young people). Mentioned "see something, say something" initiative, most buses have CCTV.
  Re: cleanliness – planning research on this. Can be reported directly at pool meadow and cleaners are on hand.

Cllr Mayer – driver training
  Answer: customer training needs to be robust and consistent. Drivers need to understand their customer service role. Spoke about drivers being able to make customer announcements.
  NXMids have Master Driver programmes that encourage and incentivise drivers.

Chair sum up

Key points:
- Accountability
- How the public input
- Please to see Bus Alliance going from strength to strength
- Objective is to overcome the fear of using public transport.
- Liked the point made regarding bus hubs
- Air quality and accessibility is a major issue.

Session 3 – What are the key accessibility issues for public transport in the City and how can they be addressed?

Chris Coyle, Integrated Transport Manager, Coventry City Council, provided an overview of services provided by the City Council, which included:-
• number of vehicles in fleet and the hours when those vehicles were in use
• number of users and trips a day/year
• purpose of those trips

The Chair, Councillor McNicholas, asked for this information to be made available to Members of the Scrutiny Board.

Bridget Harper highlighted the importance of accessible transport to older people both in terms of physical and mental health and stressed the need to ensure good communication when any changes are made which will effect accessibility. Bridget suggested using the Transport Theme Group of the Age Friendly Network to facilitate any consultation.

The Scrutiny Board discussed the following issues:-
• The need to investigate the better utilisation of Council vehicles during the day when they are currently not in use by carrying out a review of existing provision available in the City and consulting on what provision is required by people in the City.
• Issues relating to the current Ring and Ride service, particularly in relation to picking up/dropping off at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire and the current criteria applied to service users.
• Work carried out by the Travel Training Team and the benefits of this work. Consideration of buddy system for older people who have lost confidence or developed mobility issues.
• Cross boundary travel between Warwickshire and the West Midlands and if the West Midlands Combined Authority will provide any opportunities to remove these boundaries.

45. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no additional items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 2.30 pm)