

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 8 September 2021

Present:

Members: Councillor C Miks (Chair)
Councillor J Clifford (substitute for Councillor R Lancaster)
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor M Heaven
Councillor T Jandu
Councillor P Male
Councillor B Singh
Councillor A Tucker

Other Invited Member: Councillor J O'Boyle – Cabinet Member for Job, Regeneration and Climate Change

Employees (by Service):

Law and Governance G Holmes, M Salmon

Transportation and Highways C Knight, J Seddon

Apologies: Councillor R Lancaster
Councillor E Ruane

Public Business

6. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

7. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2021 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

8. Coventry Transport Strategy

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a Briefing Note and Presentation of the Director of Transportation and Highways that detailed the draft Coventry Transport Strategy, the review of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan, the emerging West Midlands submission to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, and the current work on Coventry's Transport Innovation Programme, as illustrated at the 'Our Future Moves Exhibition' hosted at the Coventry Transport Museum.

Coventry Transport Strategy

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) was the statutory transport authority for the West Midlands, including Coventry and had a duty to prepare and implement a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The current LTP, Movement for Growth, was being reviewed to reflect national and regional policy changes, notably in relation to climate change, and Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), the transport delivery body for the WMCA had published a Green Transport Paper to start this process (copy attached as an Appendix to the Briefing Note).

As a constituent authority of the WMCA, Coventry City Council was closely engaged with the LTP Review. It had been agreed that the WMCA's LTP would be integrated with Local Transport Strategies covering each of the individual constituent authorities, although the four Black Country authorities were working together on a joint strategy for their area. Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull were all producing individual transport strategies for their areas.

Work had commenced on the preparation of the Coventry Transport Strategy, with engagement with the public through a Let's Talk consultation in March 2021 (a summary of the responses were attached as an Appendix to the Briefing Note), and workshops being held with key stakeholders including bus and rail companies, neighbouring local authorities, TfWM, Midlands Connect, Highways England, Network Rail and other specific interest groups representing cyclists, businesses and other interests.

The engagement resulted in the identification of core objectives relating to the future management of Coventry's transport network, and in the preparation of a draft Coventry Transport Strategy (attached as a further Appendix to the Briefing Note). Comments from the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) on the current draft were welcomed prior to consideration of the Draft Strategy by Cabinet at their meeting in October 2021.

The current draft strategy provided the policy framework, however an implementation plan setting out a five-year investment programme in Coventry's transport network would be added before the strategy was brought back to Cabinet for approval. The implementation plan could not be finalised until the outcome of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) process was known.

Subject to Cabinet approval in October 2021, the draft strategy would be published for consultation later in 2021, and once consultation feedback had been reviewed and the outcome of the CRSTS process known, the strategy would be finalised, complete with implementation plan, and presented to Cabinet for approval in early 2022.

West Midlands Local Transport Plan

Work had commenced on the review of the West Midlands LTP with the publication of the Green Transport Paper (GTP) and this was currently out to consultation. The GTP identified tackling the climate emergency, reducing transport inequality, reducing physical inactivity, enhancing local communities and places, and building a strong, inclusive, economy as the priorities for the new LTP. The priorities aligned well with the core objectives identified for Coventry's draft Transport Strategy.

TfWM were looking to prepare the draft LTP for review by the WMCA Board in early 2022, a timescale that broadly mirrored that proposed for the Coventry Transport Strategy. Therefore, by mid-2022 the transport policy framework for Coventry would consist of an updated West Midlands Local Transport Plan setting the regional policy framework, and a Coventry Transport Strategy providing the more detailed local framework including a five-year implementation plan.

City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement

The five-year implementation plan would be based upon the outcome of the City Regional Sustainable Transport Settlement process which was currently underway. Essentially, the CRSTS would give the WMCA, and its constituent authorities, a five-year capital funding settlement for transport covering 2022 to 2027.

The CRSTS comprised £4.2 billion which would be allocated across the eight Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) established within England. A semi-competitive process was underway with each MCA being required to submit a bid to Government setting out its funding ask for 2022-2027 and to explain what schemes would be delivered and what outcomes achieved. The initial submission would be approved by the WMCA Board in September 2021. Full guidance on the process was issued by the Department for Transport in July, so a rapid turn-around had been required.

For the WMCA, the DfT specified a funding range of £780 million to £1.28 billion, meaning that the West Midlands submission should expect a funding settlement within this range. Additional funding would be allocated separately for core Integrated Transport and Highway Maintenance programmes, whilst the WMCA and constituent authorities would also have access to funding streams associated with Active Travel and Bus Service Improvement Plans.

Coventry was closely and proactively engaged with the CRSTS process with the aim of securing a funding package that would enable the Council to deliver a programme of transport schemes that would support the objectives set out within the draft transport strategy. Specific priorities included the Very Light Rail Programme, continued development of the segregated cycle route network, and highway corridor improvements that will benefit all road users, including pedestrians and bus users.

Transport Innovation Programme

The Programme would include innovative transport projects such as Very Light Rail and measures to support the further roll-out of zero emission vehicles. The Our Future Moves Exhibition currently displayed at the Coventry Transport Museum, showcased the wide range of transport technology projects being led by Coventry's business and academic communities, many of which had direct or indirect support from the City Council. Whilst Very Light Rail (VLR) was the highest profile of these projects, especially in terms of Council involvement, the exhibition demonstrated that local research and development activity was taking place across the full spectrum of transport, from technology that would help visually impaired pedestrians to moves to de-carbonise the marine and aviation sectors.

The aim was to build upon the Our Future Moves Exhibition to develop a digital archive that could be used to promote Coventry and the surrounding area as a place in which transport innovators could do business, using the city as a “living lab” building upon projects such as the Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Testbed. An associated events programme was being developed with the further aim of promoting the city, and projects such as VLR, to a wider audience, especially whilst the spotlight was on the city during City of Culture, and with opportunities existing to link with COP26.

The presentation detailed the following:

- Transport Governance – structure and responsibilities
- Funding Sources - City Region Sustainable Transport Fund, Active Travel Fund, Bus Service Improvement Plan, Road Investment Strategy, Rail Network Enhancement Plan, Large Local Major Schemes, Developer funding, Major Road Network, Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership, and Issue specific e.g. AQ Implementation Fund
- Strategy Development – Context and latest progress
- Regional and Local Strategic Priorities – still being developed but high level of agreement on objectives/ strategic direction. Implementation plans shaped by decisions on CRSTF
- Draft local strategy: Priorities – Public Transport, Active Travel, Highways, Zero Emission Vehicles
- Likely Strategy Timeline – September 2021 to July 2022
- Transport Innovation Programme - Electric Vehicles, Battery Innovation, Very Light Rail, CAV Testbed, Urban Airport, and Micromobility
- Ultra-fast Charging Hubs / Green Innovation Park – working with partners, charging facilities, multi-fuel hubs, associated facilities and SME research hubs, and energy generation and supply opportunities.
- Coventry and Warwickshire City Linking Energy and Network Hub (Clean Hub)
- Electric Vehicles - Future Works: exploring 'car clubs' and 'lift-share', future mobility pilot scheme, inclusion of car club cars in residential and mixed-use developments, and charging on the move: Dynamic Wireless Power Transfer
- Dynamic vehicle charging (DynaCOV) – charging on the move
- Battery production facilities to help Electric Vehicle transition - UK Battery Industrialisation Centre, and Gigafactory Coventry Airport
- Coventry- All Electric Bus City
- Very Light Rail Vehicle and Technology - contract awarded to TDi, and £4M budget to build a certifiable ready demonstrator vehicle
- Connected Autonomous Vehicles Testbed – funding, objective, duration, project value, grant, Transport for West Midlands grant, and partners
- Urban Airport - facility for drone transport, demonstrator project, partnership with Innovate UK and Hyundai, likely to be onsite October – December 2021, and potential future applications – Passenger transport? Freight delivery? Disaster relief?

The Board questioned officers, received responses and discussed the following issues:

- Review and timetable – objectives and key points were evolving, and an annual review had been built into the process.
- Electric Vehicles Charging Scheme – working well and would be reviewed annually to assess any need to increase or decrease charges.
- Charter Avenue Active Travel Scheme – trial scheme in progress. Permanent scheme progressing with designs to be finalised shortly and an anticipated implementation in March 2022
- Request that Ward members be kept up to date on activity planned for their wards, including formal consultations and consultation results.
- Foleshill Road Active Travel Scheme – work on designs progressing with an anticipated timescale for consultation in October/November 2021 and implementation in Spring 2022. A funding announcement for next generation schemes is awaited. Schemes all in progress.
- HS2 – Current position of HS2 included in the Transport Strategy. Access to HS2 services for connection to North and South of the country essential for jobs and the economy. Fast connection between Coventry and London maintained at three trains per hour. Currently exploring enhanced bus services and whether very light rail should be extended to the HS2 Interchange.
- VLR – rationale of the scheme outlined. Initially to be available to connect the City Centre and University Hospital, with longer-term network planning to potentially extend onto the HS2 interchange. VLR considered as an alternative to buses to connect to HS2.
- Coundon Cycleway – cost of scheme £3.5m
- Connectivity – Connecting Coventry- Strategic Transport Investment Programme Report considered by the Cabinet in January 2016. Suggest that the connectivity between different modes of transport on key routes across the city and the wider region be highlighted in the Strategy
- Birmingham Interchange and Birmingham Rail Station – 2-kilometre distance between the two locations – connectivity to be considered.
- Trackless systems – all developments were kept under review. Indications that Trackless systems don't create the mode shifts that VLR does. People will locate to where the best travel systems are in place.
- Track-based systems - number of reasons why a track-based system was considered the best option. On 24th September 2021 there would be a showcasing of what had been achieved. Track system considered best option for regional travel however, trackless travel beneficial for internal sites such as airports.
- Gigafactory – Planning process progressing through Warwick District Council. Update required relating to agreements with suppliers and customer and government funding, to enable it to happen.
- TfWM – local knowledge of organisation to be improved to enable an appropriate response to the City's transport needs.
- CAV Testbed Routes – Coventry route along A45

- Impact of changing travel modes – anticipated that car ownership would be maintained, with car usage changing: short journeys could be done in a different way for example. Important to alleviate traffic congestion. Pursuing a complimentary transport network not an ‘instead of’ network. Any jobs/economic loss expected to be replaced by a new sector in new emerging markets – new manufacturers and employment opportunities.
- Progress with housing developers - working creatively to get people to see that the Car is not the only travel option. Mobility credits being trialled in the City. Promotion of Swift Card/extension to smart ticketing, being developed. As part of the welcome pack to residents of new housing developments, developers were being encouraged to offer lifestyle travel options such as swift cards, car clubs and lift share.
- E-scooters - research into their use was being undertaken with much learned in their trial. Police had powers to take actions on e-scooter issues. There were endorsed legal schemes. Since the trial in Coventry there had been a number of changes/improvements: registration documents in place for each scooter; differentiating between hire E-scooters and private scooters; boy scooters had been introduced; and indicators had been added to models. A permanent scheme would be introduced in due course. The Department for Transport had indicated that the process would take time.

The Board requested that details of funding and the consultation feedback for the Charter Avenue Active Travel Scheme, be circulated to them. They also requested that the Director of Business, Culture and Investment provide Members of the Board with an update on the progress of the Gigafactory in respect of agreements with suppliers and customer and government funding, to enable it to happen.

RESOLVED that, having reviewed the draft Coventry Transport Strategy, the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):

- 1) Made no specific recommendations for Cabinet to consider.**
- 2) Raised the following points to be considered as part of the consultation on the draft Transport Strategy:**
 - i) That ward members are kept up to date on activity which is planned for their wards, including formal consultations and consultation results.**
 - ii) The connectivity between different modes of transport on key routes across the city and the wider region is highlighted in the Strategy.**

9. Work Programme 2021/2022

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator that detailed issues on the Board’s Work Programme for meetings of the Board for 2021/2022.

Members of the Board requested that a copy of the briefing note and presentation relating to 'Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 – Impact and Legacy Planning' considered by the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee at their meeting on 8th September 2021, be circulated to them.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) notes the issues on the Board's Work Programme for 2021/2022 with an update to the Programme that the item relating to 'Cycling Strategy' or the item relating to 'Active Travel with Schools' be included on the agenda for the meeting of the Board on 8th December 2021.

10. **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 other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 4.00 pm)