

Transport Committee

7 March 2019

Present: Councillor L Robinson, Chair
Councillor G Friel, Deputy Chair

Councillors R Abbey, A Carr, J Dodd, S Foulkes,
P Hayes, H Howard, D Johnson, A Lavelle,
P McKinley, N Nicholas, M O'Mara OBE, G Pearl,
G Philbin, K Roberts, J Stockton,
C Rowe, H Thompson, J Williams and F Wynn

93. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Baum, J Jackson and S Murphy.

94. **Chair's Announcement**

The Chair congratulated Councillor S Murphy on her appointment as deputy leader for St Helens council and noted her resignation from the Committee. The Committee thereupon thanked Councillor Murphy for her contributions over the last year and wished her every success in the future.

Councillor Ron Abbey stated his heartfelt thanks to the staff at Merseytravel and the members of the Transport Committee for their support during his recent bereavement.

On behalf of the Transport Committee, Councillor Gordon Friel congratulated the Chair and his wife on the recent birth of their daughter.

95. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor S Foulkes declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6 Merseyferries Quarterly Update March 2019, as the Chair of the planning committee at Wirral Borough Council. He stated that he would have an open mind on any decision made regarding Woodside Ferry Terminal.

96. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

Resolved - That the minutes of the last meeting of the Transport Committee held on 31 January 2019, be approved as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

Minute 88 – Budget Setting Report 2019/20; page 7 of the agenda, second paragraph seventh line be amended to correctly read ‘He stated that it had been quite clear that the region had been targeted for more cuts than any other region across the UK and that money had been moved away from Metropolitan Councils to Conservative controlled councils in the mainly ‘shire’ areas’.

97. **Presentation**

Mick Noone, Director of Integrated Transport, provided a presentation to members which explained the progress to date on Northern Powerhouse Rail and HS2. The presentation focussed on the project timeline, recent milestones and next steps. It acknowledged that the project provided a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform rail in the North of England, and officers from Merseytravel, in particular Tom Carbery and Wayne Menzies, were thanked for their hard work.

The Director stated that points of access to HS2 had been identified and would be beneficial in improving journey times from Liverpool to Manchester, Leeds and London. Aspirations for a journey time of 1 hour 20 from Liverpool to London were discussed alongside the expected benefits for the City Region, which included an additional £3.4 billion annually to the economy, 24,000 jobs in the Region and 3.6 million new visitors per annum.

Achieving the desired journey times and service frequency were emphasised by Mick Noone as crucial and the Committee was advised that this was a significant issue for the City Region and the Officers would continue to make representations to secure the appropriate level of investment required to transform the North of England.

Members of the Committee raised the following key issues during the discussion:-

- It was noted that any potential works such as platform lengthening would be shared with Liverpool City Council to ensure that they could be planned effectively alongside the City Centre Connectivity Scheme and Lime Street Upgrades;
- Councillor G Friel raised the importance of improving freight capacity particularly given the implications of a no deal Brexit wherein the ports would become integral to moving produce from the West to the East of the country through the Pennines. Additionally, a further issue was that the TransPennine upgrade focused mainly on moving passengers as opposed to freight; yet Transport for the North were emphasising the importance of ensuring that the upgrade included the gauge clearance necessary for the Liverpool City Region to move freight across the Pennines;

- It was acknowledged that the Liverpool City Region had contributed officer and Member time into the development of the Strategic Business Case, while Government had provided the financial resource for modelling and economic analysis.

The Chair, thanked the Director of Integrated Transport for his presentation and echoed his thanks to the Rail team for their hard work. He further added that the Liverpool City Region was the most diligent and conscientious of the contributors to the Northern Powerhouse by always providing expertise and evidence whenever necessary. It was noted that High Speed rail was first considered almost ten years ago and at that time the Liverpool City Region had not featured on the map. Since then, the City Region had provided a great amount of input into the plans and would continue to emphasise the importance of freight.

In terms of prioritising routes, the Chair, Councillor Robinson, felt that it was in the best interest of the UK to ensure that the Liverpool City Region had the next national rail infrastructure strategy as Liverpool to Manchester had the strongest city-to-city passenger journeys. Liverpool Lime Street had the highest number of passenger rail journeys from London. Furthermore, rail journeys from Liverpool to London were also increasing in demand with only Manchester exceeding that.

In conclusion, the Chair felt that everyone involved should feel very proud when the strategy came to fruition in 2030 as it would put the City Region in good stead for the next 200 years.

RESOLVED - that the presentation be noted.

98. **Quarter 3 Merseytravel Corporate Plan, Performance and Financial Monitoring Report 2018/19**

Sarah Johnston (Head of Finance, Merseytravel) and Stephen Littler (Performance Manager, LCR Combined Authority) presented the Quarter 3 Merseytravel Corporate Plan, Performance and Financial Monitoring Report for 2018/19.

The Committee was informed that there was currently a £3.7million underspend for 2018/19 which resulted in a reduction in the need to use Merseytravel's reserves to balance the budget.

Currently, 45% of the budget had been spent and it was noted that this was normal given the significant spending which usually took place in Quarter 4.

Members were advised that future reports would also include information related to the LCR Combined Authority's transport priority.

Councillor Friel queried if there were plans to review the metrics for affordability for tunnels users. The metrics had previously been based on cars

with 2 litre engines and the introduction of electric and hybrid vehicles had not been taken into consideration. Members were advised that this matter would be explored further as the current data was taken from the RAC website.

The Committee discussed 'back-office' services such as IT, Project Management Office and Legal Services which were recharged to other departments. The Committee was advised that this was a standard approach in line with Best Value Accounting practices.

Members noted that some areas appeared to be under spending, and were informed that this was due to some projects being rolled over to the next financial year.

John Fogarty, Director of Corporate Services/Resources, explained that in some instances, reserves were used to spread the cost of a project into more manageable payments, for instance with the Rolling Stock Programme. However, using the reserves to balance the budget was a significant underlying issue made worse by the Special Rail Grant reduction.

The Committee then discussed the amber and amber/red Key Performance Indicators particularly around Priority 3B. Gary Evans, Head of Customer Delivery assured Members that actions were underway to secure a future for the Royal Daffodil Ferry and that the Long Term Strategy for Woodside Ferry Terminal would remain amber/red as options continued to be developed in this regard.

Members expressed some concern over the presentation of the information in the report and it was hoped that when the format changed in Quarter 4 it would be easier to understand.

Councillor Foulkes, Lead Member for Finance, noted that the current format of this report showed improvements from previous iterations and thanked Officers for their continued efforts. Furthermore, he stated that the Officers involved were always open to suggestions on how to clarify the information in the documents for the public and welcomed any feedback.

RESOLVED – that the contents of the report be noted.

99. **Mersey Ferries Quarterly Update March 2019**

Gary Evans, Head of Customer Delivery provided the Mersey Ferries Quarterly Update for March 2019 noting that it had been a good year.

Members were advised that the efforts by Asset Management in ensuring that the vessels were ready for service had made a real difference to the reliability and availability of the service especially during the summer, when the vessel was taken out of the Dock System during the weekends.

Furthermore, in December 2018 during a routine inspection, essential repairs had been identified for the infrastructure at Seacombe Ferry Terminal. As a safety measure, the linkspan had been closed and operations had continued using the adjacent South Bridge. Repairs were expected to be completed in April 2019 and the linkspan would be fully operational ahead of the summer season.

The Head of Customer Delivery explained that the Dazzle paintwork on the Snowdrop had been extended and the vessel would be visible on the river from the end of March 2019. He went on to advise that the procurement of new vessels was now underway and bids had been submitted by the closing date of December 2018. The bids were currently being evaluated and the procurement process was on target for delivery in summer 2019. Furthermore, ESIF funding for the vessels had also been identified and research was being undertaken to determine how emissions on the vessels could be reduced.

The Committee was informed that the Wirral Chamber of Commerce were developing the offer at Woodside Ferry Terminal, noting that the catering provision at the terminal had recently changed. Gary Evans emphasised that there was no additional financial provision for Woodside Ferry Terminal and funding would have to be sought for any long term developments.

Councillor S Foulkes felt that the Wirral Chamber of Commerce announcement in relation to Woodside Ferry Terminal was an exciting offer that could increase footfall alongside the Drive in Cinema already situated at Woodside.

RESOLVED - that the contents of the report be noted.

100. **Response to Welsh Government Consultation - Improving Public Transport in Wales**

Mick Noone, Director of Integrated Transport presented a report that outlined the Liverpool City Region response to the Welsh Government's Consultation on improved public transport in Wales.

The Committee heard that the Consultation had investigated the decline in bus patronage in Wales and identified a need for organisational and structural change. The report had recommended that the Liverpool City Region support the Welsh Government and continue to have ongoing meetings on the challenges of devolution.

Councillor Abbey, Lead Member for Bus, welcomed the report stating that it showed huge potential to work across the border in North Wales.

The Chair, Councillor Robinson, stated that although the issues faced by the Welsh Government did not directly affect the Liverpool City Region, Wales were our 'close neighbours' and that transport was a key factor to the economic sphere of influence that we shared. The Liverpool City Region had

strong links with the Welsh Government and Councillor Robinson complimented them on their 'can-do' mentality and warm friendly outreach.

RESOLVED - that:

- (a) the outline response to the consultation set out in section 4 of the report be endorsed; and
- (b) the Director of Policy and Strategic Commissioning, in full consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Transport Committee be granted delegated authority to finalise the draft response ahead of its submission to the Welsh Government on the 27 March 2019.

101. **Public Question Time**

The Committee received two questions from Mr Andrew Wennell as follows:

Question 1

The Bus route 133 which runs between Kirkby and Waterloo is currently run by Cumfybus. From 28th April the route is going to be run by Hatton Travel, with some significant changes to the route and its frequency. The service is currently 1 bus per hour, the new tender will see the frequency decrease to 1 bus every 2 hours. So is this change needed as the service is a vital connection in the area? I think the service wouldn't be as good when it changes over.

The Chair, Councillor Robinson, responded by stating that as part of a recent tendering process, Merseytravel had issued two tender options for the 133 bus provision. The successful tender specified an hourly frequency and the route remained the same. From 28th April 2019 the operator would change from Cumfybus to Hatton's Travel but the route and timetable would be unchanged with the exception of the 133A morning journey that would be withdrawn.

Question 2

Since the opening of the Mersey Gateway bridge in October 2017 the bus service in the Greenway Road area has significantly reduced. Are there any plans to improve this now or when the Silver Jubilee Bridge reopens? As beforehand every bus used to serve Runcorn station before going over or just been over the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

The Chair advised that a response had been sought from Halton Borough Council and they had advised that Greenway Road continues to have the same frequency of service as prior to the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) closure. The 61 bus continued to operate along the route although the 82a has been withdrawn and replaced by the X1 service. The services that passed the bus stop at the rail station from Runcorn Town Centre only used the section of Greenway Road from the High Street to the on-slip to the SJB to cross to Widnes. None of these services stopped on Greenway Road itself. It was

anticipated that bus services would revert to using the SJB once it re-opened therefore serving the bus stop at the rail station on the SJB approach.

The Chair thanked Mr Wennell for submitting his questions and for attending the meetings and informed him that a formal written response would be provided within 10 working days.

102. **Petitions and Statements**

No petitions or statements were submitted for this meeting.

CHAIR