

Berkshire Local Transport Body – Meeting held on Thursday, 14th November, 2019.

Present:-

Councillor Page (in the Chair)	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Anderson	Slough Borough Council
Councillor Brunel-Walker	Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Clark (from 4.16pm)	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Malcolm Kempton	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Bob Mountain	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Councillor Somner	West Berkshire Council
Matthew Taylor	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

Also present under Rule 30:- Councillor Atkinson (deputy member, Bracknell Forest Council)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Jorgensen, Stuart Atkinson, Charles Eales and Simon Ratcliffe

PART 1

16. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

17. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th July 2019

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) held on 18th July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

18. Briefing Note - TVB LEP/BLTB 'How We Work'

Members noted a briefing note that summarised the process by which Thames Valley Berkshire LEP and the Berkshire Local Transport Body operated in investing in local transport schemes.

Resolved – That the BLTB 'How We Work' briefing note be noted.

19. Thames Valley Berkshire Local Growth Deal 2015/16 to 2020/21

A report was received on the progress of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Growth Deal which set out the status of approved schemes, updated financial profile and identified risks. The report had been reformatted to more clearly present an overview of the schemes in the programme as set out in Table 4.

Members asked questions about a number of specific schemes including the timetables for the Slough: Langley Station Access and Wokingham: Coppid Beach Park and Ride. An update was provided on the funding status of

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Reading: Green Park Railway Station. Additional Local Growth Fund and New Stations Fund monies had now been agreed which meant the project could progress, with a scheduled completion date of Winter 2020.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That the progress made on schemes previously given programme entry status, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

20. Thames Valley Berkshire Local Growth Funds - Call for bids - Process

A report was considered on a proposal to create a new call for bids in order to meet any additional funding being made available for Berkshire and the proposed arrangements for assessing and prioritising potential projects.

The amount and source of any future funding was not confirmed, but it could include the reallocation of existing Local Growth Fund or Business Rates Retention Pilot scheme monies or new sources of funding such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The current pipeline of schemes of BLTB had been emptied and it was considered important to refresh this to be prepared in the event that any further funding became available. As specified in the BLTB Assurance Framework 4.0, the BLTB would issue a new call for capital schemes based on the eligibility criteria set out in the report. The prioritisation methodology had been reviewed in July 2019 and it was recommended that the existing methodology be used. The proposal was for the close of bids to be 31st January 2020 with a view to approving a list of prioritised schemes at the BLTB meeting in March 2020.

(Councillor Clark joined the meeting)

Members acknowledged that Berkshire had a strong track record of developing and managing a programme of schemes and agreed to issue a new call for bids for the reasons outlined. There was a discussion about the prioritisation methodology, eligibility criteria and timetable. The report proposed that there be a minimum scheme size of £5m and/or associated housing development of 500 houses to seek to support schemes of a scale that would deliver strategic economic impact. It was acknowledged that there may be slightly smaller schemes that could deliver high economic impact and it was agreed there should be some flexibility in the eligibility criteria. An amendment was therefore approved to the criteria in paragraph 16 (ii) of the report to read: "Scale: a minimum scheme size of £5m and/or minimum-size associated housing development of 500 houses, *would normally be required.*"

Several Members queried whether the criteria set out in the prioritisation methodology gave sufficient weight to environmental considerations and sustainable transport. It was agreed that the LEP would work with officers to see what more could be done to elevate this factor in the weighting or scoring criteria. Local authorities also asked whether there was any flexibility in the timetable for the closing date for bids of 31st January 2020. It was noted that

the timescales were tight to complete the scoring and moderation in time for the Berkshire Strategic Transport (Officers) Forum in February and BLTB in March, however, the LEP would work with officers on the phasing and timings to ensure there was sufficient time to submit strong projects.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the process for a new call for bids was agreed, subject to the amendment to the eligibility criteria on the scale of projects and officers giving further consideration to the matters raised on the prioritisation methodology and timetable.

Resolved – That a new call for bids be approved as set out in Appendices 1 to 3 to the report and per the agreed LGF prioritisation methodology, subject to the amendment agreed on the eligibility criteria, and further refinement of the weightings and timescales.

21. Financial Approval 2.35 Reading: Reading West Railway Station Upgrade

A report was considered that recommended giving full financial approval to scheme 2.35 Reading: Reading West Railway Station Upgrade. A sum of £3.1m would be contributed from the Local Growth Fund towards a total scheme cost of £4.24m. The scheme was jointly being promoted by Reading Borough Council and GWR and it would deliver an improved passenger experience and multi-modal interchange, including a new station building, highway changes and improvements to platform facilities and the Tilehurst Road entrance.

Members agreed that it was a strong scheme which would promote sustainable travel. It was noted that the Independent Assessor had identified some risks on the delivery and timetable of the scheme, however, the LEP believed that these issues could be managed within the existing conditions. The first payment would not be due until 2021 which would provide time to assess the risks identified. A number of other points were clarified including the impact of proposed rail time changes in December 2019.

At the conclusion of the discussion, it was agreed to give the scheme full financial approval on the terms set out in the report.

Resolved – That scheme 2.35 Reading: Reading West Station Upgrade be given full financial approval in the sum of £3,100,000 over the period 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out at paragraph 11 step 5 of the report. The observations made by the Independent Assessor regarding delivery and timing risks were noted but it was believed that the existing conditions of the capital grant letter would enable the LEP to work closely with Reading Borough Council and the relevant partners to ensure timely delivery of the scheme.

22. Financial Approval 2.37 Bracknell: A322/ A329 Corridor Improvements

A report was considered that recommended giving full financial approval to scheme 2.37 Bracknell: A322/A329 Corridor Improvements. A sum of £2.0m would be contributed from the Local Growth Fund towards a total scheme cost of £2.4m. The project would significantly contribute to accommodating movement and reducing congestion between the M4 and M3 and between Reading, Wokingham and Bracknell.

It was recognised that removing pinchpoints from this key transport corridor was a strategic priority and the project formed part of a wider programme of enhancements. The scheme had an exceptionally high Benefit to Cost Ratio of 5.18 and the Independent Assessor had recommended the scheme for approval.

After due consideration, it was agreed to give the scheme full financial approval.

Resolved – That scheme 2.37 Bracknell: A322/A329 Corridor Improvements be given full financial approval in the sum of £2,000,000 in 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out in paragraph 11 step 5 below.

23. Financial Approval 2.42 Wokingham: South Wokingham Distributor Road - Eastern Gateway

A report was considered that recommended giving full financial approval to scheme 2.42 Wokingham: South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway. A sum of £5.0m would be contributed from the Business Rates Retention Pilot towards a total scheme cost of £20.159m. The scheme would comprise a single carriageway distributor road connecting Montague Park with Waterloo Road, including a new road bridge over the Waterloo rail line.

One of the benefits of the scheme was that it would unlock the development of 630 new houses. It was noted that the scheme had a high Benefit to Cost Ratio of 3.12. Members commented on the potential impact the scheme could have elsewhere on the highway network including the displacement of congestion and potential 'rat runs'. It was noted that the traffic impacts of some the planning applications unlocked by the scheme had already been modelled.

At the conclusion of the discussion the scheme was given full financial approval.

Resolved – That scheme 2.42 Wokingham: South Wokingham Distributor Road – Eastern Gateway be given full financial approval in the sum of £5,000,000 in 2019/20 on the terms of the funding agreement set out in paragraph 11 step 5 of the report.

24. Financial Approval 2.43 Wokingham: Barkham Bridge

A report was considered that recommended giving financial approval to scheme 2.43 Wokingham: Barkham Bridge. A sum of £4.24m would be contributed from the Local Growth Fund towards a total scheme cost of £7.68m. The project consisted of a new bridge across the Barkham Brook and approximately 300 metres of associated carriageway realignment. The existing bridge would be retained and converted to a shared footway/cycleway.

The existing single lane bridge suffered from congestion and the new bridge would have a lane each way to alleviate congestion, improve accessibility and help enable new developments nearby such as at Arborfield Garrison. The Benefit to Cost Ratio was considered to be good for a bridge project and the scheme was well advanced and deliverable.

After due consideration it was agreed to give the scheme full financial approval.

Resolved – That scheme 2.43 Wokingham Barkham Bridge be given full financial approval in the sum of £2,100,000 in 2019/20 and £2,135,641 in 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out at paragraph 11 step 5 of the report.

25. Transport for the South East - Subscription Report Update

A report was considered regarding the subscriptions to Transport for the South East (TfSE). The LTB had previously agreed to pay subscriptions for 2017/18 and 2018/19, to be split evenly between the six constituent authorities. The agreement had expired and a further decision was therefore required on future arrangements.

Whilst TfSE continued to progress plans to become a statutory body, it was proposed that the BLTB agree the renewal of subscriptions on an annual basis. The subscription for 2019/20 would be £58,000, the same as for the previous year, and it was agreed to renew the subscriptions as recommended.

Resolved – That a renewed annual subscription of £58,000 be agreed for TfSE to cover the period 2019/20, with the amount to be split 6 ways between the constituent authorities.

26. TFSE Draft Transport Strategy - consultation response

A report was considered that updated on the Transport for the South East (TfSE) draft Transport Strategy consultation. The consultation would close on 10th January 2020, before the next scheduled meeting of the BLTB, and a draft response was set out in the report and appendices for consideration and approval.

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The draft strategy was based around three goals: the economic imperative of improving productivity, investment and growth; the societal benefits of improving health, safety and wellbeing; and the environmental necessity to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment. The proposed response included recommending the inclusion of key Berkshire road corridors such as the A33, A34, A329/A322 and the A4 in the further work that would be commissioned on key route corridors and welcomed the engagement with a future Journey's scenario. The responses to the specific consultation questions were set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

Members welcomed the response and agreed with the overall Berkshire wide position taken as set out in the appendices, noting that local authorities may make their own submissions to highlight more local issues. It was proposed and agreed that an additional comment be made in the response to question 11 to highlight the importance of access to Gatwick airport to Berkshire's economy. With this addition noted, the response was agreed.

Resolved –

(a) That it be noted that the three goals around which the TfSE draft Transport Strategy was based aligned well with the objectives of the Strategic Economic Plan and the locally-agreed Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS).

(b) That the response to the consultation as set out in Appendices 1 & 2 to the report be endorsed.

27. BLTB Forward Plan

The BLTB Forward Plan which set out the matters to be considered at future meetings was considered and noted.

Resolved – That the BLTB Forward Plan be noted.

28. Date of Next Meeting - 12th March 2020

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12th March 2020.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.01 pm and closed at 4.52 pm)