

Berkshire Local Transport Body – Meeting held on Thursday, 4th June, 2020.

Present:-

Councillor Anderson	Slough Borough Council
Councillor Brunel-Walker	Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Clark	RBWM
Councillor Jorgensen	Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Page (from 4.26pm)	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Somner	West Berkshire Council
Stuart Atkinson	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Charles Eales (in the chair)	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Bob Mountain	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

(Due to technical issues with Councillor Page's access to the virtual meeting, the Vice-Chair, Charles Eales was in the chair for the duration of the meeting.)

In attendance:- Councillor Atkinson (deputy member from Bracknell Forest Council)

Apologies for Absence:- Malcolm Kempton, Simon Ratcliffe and Matthew Taylor

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

It was noted that Councillors Anderson, Brunel-Walker, Jorgensen and Somner were elected members of local authorities seeking financial approval for schemes on the agenda, but they did not have disclosable pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests and would participate and vote on these matters.

2. 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.

3. Covid 19 and Local Growth Fund timing update

A report was considered that summarised the potential impact of Covid-19 on remaining Local Growth Fund (LGF) infrastructure schemes.

The LEP was working proactively with local authority transport officers and other parties to monitor the impact on schemes to ensure timely delivery. Whilst the situation continued to evolve, work continued on most schemes,

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albeit at a slower pace due to social distancing restrictions on site. There were no significant project delays currently identified.

The LGF funding envelope would conclude in March 2021 and the timetable was summarised.

It was also noted that the Government had made additional funding available to local authorities through the emergency active travel fund to rapidly introduce schemes to improve temporary cycling and walking facilities in view of the limitations on public transport capacity.

The report was noted.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

4. Revised Local Growth Fund Programme 2015/16 to 2020/21 - Update June 2020

A report was considered that updated the BLTB on recent revisions to the Local Growth Fund Programme 2015/16 to 2020/21 and sought approval to grant programme entry status to four schemes from the available funds.

It was noted that scheme 2.33 GWR Maidenhead to Marlow Branch Line upgrade had been withdrawn by Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP and GWR. This scheme had been allocated £1,525,000 from Berkshire's LGF in July 2018. Scheme 2.37 Bracknell A322/A329 Corridor had previously been allocated a total of £2,000,000, however, as the scheme was linked to the now withdrawn 2.39 Wokingham Coppid Beech Northbound On-Slip Widening scheme Bracknell Forest Council had reduced the scope of the A322/A329 corridor improvements and now sought £400,000 of the original £2,000,000 allocated. It was considered that the revised scheme was still viable.

These changes meant that £3,436,882 was available to be allocated and it was recommended that schemes in the pipeline be brought forward:

- 2.29 Wokingham Winnersh Park and Ride addendum 2 Turning Head and Urban Realm Improvements for £675,000;
- 2.24 Newbury Station addendum 2 Cycle Hubs and Office Space Improvements for £340,000;
- 2.45 Slough: Langley High Street Improvements phase 1 for £1,324,000; and
- 2.46 Slough: Langley High Street Improvement phase 2 for £1,033,000.

After due consideration, BLTB noted the updated position on the programme and agreed to reallocate the available funding to the four schemes from the prioritised pipeline as per the recommendations in the report.

Resolved –

(a) That it be noted that:

- the allocated funding for scheme 2.33 GWR Maidenhead to Marlow Branch Line for £1,525,000 had been withdrawn;
- the allocated funding for Scheme 2.37 Bracknell A322/A329 Corridor Improvements had been changed from £2,000,000 to £400,000.

(b) That programme entry status be granted to the following schemes:

- 2.29 Wokingham Winnersh Park and Ride addendum 2 Turning Head and Urban Realm Improvements for £675,000;
- 2.24 Newbury Station addendum 2 Cycle Hubs and Office Space Improvements for £340,000;
- 2.45 Slough: Langley High Street Improvements phase 1 for £1,324,000; and
- 2.46 Slough: Langley High Street Improvement phase 2 for £1,033,000.

5. Financial Approval 2.37 Bracknell: A322/ A329 Corridor Improvements - re-profiled

A report was considered that sought to give full financial approval to the re-profiled scheme 2.37 Bracknell: A322/A329 Corridor Improvements. A sum of £400,000 was sought for the amended scheme which focused on the Bracknell Sports Centre Roundabout which formed part of an on-going wider programme of enhancements to the corridor.

The scheme had previously been allocated a total of £2,000,000 at programme entry status, however, it had been subsequently revised following the withdrawal of the related scheme 2.39 Wokingham Coppid Beech Northbound On-Slip Widening. The Independent Assessor concluded that the revised was high value for money with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 3.34:1, was deliverable and low risk.

The scheme would tackle one of the pinchpoints on a key corridor and was aligned to the strategic objectives of the programme. At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed to give the scheme full financial approval.

Resolved – That the re-profiled scheme 2.37 Bracknell A322/A329 Corridor Improvements be given full financial approval in the sum of £400,000 in 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out in paragraph 11 step 5 of the report.

6. Financial Approval Superfast Berkshire Broadband Complete Coverage project

A report was considered that sought to give full financial approval to the Superfast Berkshire Broadband Complete Coverage project. A sum of

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£46,920 of revenue funding was sought for the scheme which would build on the work already undertaken by the Superfast Berkshire Broadband projects in delivering 96.7% broadband coverage across the sub-region by identifying solutions to provide access to circa 4,500 properties stranded as current contracts came to an end.

The scheme had scored very highly in the most recent prioritisation exercise, scoring 22 points and ranking 2nd out of the ten schemes submitted. The Independent Assessor recommended full financial approval and even in low consumer up-take case scenarios the scheme had a very high Benefit Cost Ratio of 14:1.

In view of the experience of existing contracts of the scheme, Members asked a number of questions about how the scheme would work and it was responded that it was not related to a single supplier, but would instead identify solutions for the stranded properties using a market wide approach. Members recognised the crucial issue of broadband access and speed across Berkshire and asked about the strategic approach being taken to ensure infrastructure and provision met the needs of businesses and the community. It was noted that the LEP had formed a new Digital Infrastructure Group to take forward the wider strategic issues.

At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed to give the scheme full financial approval.

Resolved – That Superfast Berkshire Broadband Complete Coverage project be given full financial approval in the sum of £46,920 in 2020/21 from the Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP) fund on the terms of the funding agreement set out in paragraph 11 step 5 of the report.

7. Financial Approval: Scheme 2.30 TVB Smart City Cluster extension

A report was considered that sought to give full financial approval to the Thames Valley Berkshire Smart City Cluster project extension. A sum of £283,620 was sought for the scheme which would extend the current scheme to Slough Borough Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council.

The specific project activities would include the delivery of a smart city Internet of Things communication platform (LoRaWAN) for use by all for local authority devices for Slough and RBWM as an open platform for commercial services and innovation with the aim of providing over 90% coverage; actively promote commercial and start up innovation on the platform by provided free access for the duration of the project; and looking to develop and secure further funding opportunities. The worst case scenario assessment by the Independent Assessor demonstrated a minimum Benefit Cost Ratio of 2:1.

Members asked the measures to ensure the platform was used and when it would rolled out to the two authorities. It was responded that the platform

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would provide wide and comprehensive coverage. The principal users would be local authorities for highways assets but it would be available to other users and would need to be properly marketed. The timetable for completion was tight but could commence quickly should funding approval be given.

At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed to give the scheme full financial approval.

Resolved – That Thames Valley Berkshire Smart City Cluster project extension be given full financial approval in the sum of £283,620 in 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out in paragraph 11 step 5 of the report.

8. Financial Approval for 2.29 Wokingham: Winnersh Triangle Park & Ride Addendums 1 Car Park enhancements

A report was considered that sought to give conditional financial approval to scheme 2.29 Wokingham Winnersh Triangle Park & Ride. A sum of £715,444 was sought for a scheme which would provide car park enhancements identified since the original scheme was approved in 2019. These included replacing the drainage system, provide electric vehicle charging points, ensuring the top deck of the car park was fully accessible and utility works. The sum of £715,444 was higher than the £675,000 awarded at the programme entry stage.

The scheme for car park enhancements had been submitted following the call for bids in January 2020. The Independent Assessor had concluded that the scheme met strategic objectives, would deliver high value for money and was deliverable. The recommendation was to give financial approval subject to the following conditions to be met no later than 31st July 2020:

1. Formal financial approval by Wokingham Borough Council for the allocated S106 scheme funding.
2. Formal financial approval by Wokingham Borough Council for any cost overruns, should they arise; and
3. Formal financial approval by Wokingham Borough Council for any loss of revenue resulting from the interim closure of the park and ride site during construction, should they arise.

A number of questions were asked about why the drainage and access issues had not been incorporated into the original design. The original design had been based on a manned station and some of the additional cost arose as Winnersh Triangle was unmanned. The requirement for further drainage works were identified following analysis carried out after the original financial approval. At the previous meeting, BLTB had discussed how cost estimates and risks could be identified earlier and would seek to strengthen the process where possible.

After due consideration, the scheme was given conditional financial approval on term sets out in the report.

Resolved – That scheme 2.29 be given financial approval in the sum of £715,444 in 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out in paragraph 11 step 5 of the report, subject to meeting the following conditions by 31st July 2020:

1. Formal financial approval by Wokingham Borough Council for the allocated S106 scheme funding.
2. Formal financial approval by Wokingham Borough Council for any cost overruns, should they arise; and
3. Formal financial approval by Wokingham Borough Council for any loss of revenue resulting from the interim closure of the park and ride site during construction, should they arise.

9. Financial Approval 2.24 Newbury: Railway Station Addendum 1 Ticket Gate Line & Addendum 2 Cycle Hubs and Office Space enhancements

A report was considered that sought to give conditional financial approval to scheme 2.24 Newbury: Railway Station Addendum 1 Ticket Gate Line & Addendum 2 Cycle Hubs and Office Space Enhancements. A sum of £640,000 in total was sought for the scheme of which £300,000 was for Gate Line Enhancements and £340,000 for Cycle Hub and Office Space Enhancements.

The scheme had a high Benefit Cost Ratio of 2.9:1 for the Gate Line enhancement and 3.2:1 for the Cycle Hub/Office space enhancement. The Independent Assessor recommended that approval be subject to the following conditions:

Gate Line Enhancements

1. Provide confirmation of the operational design horizon for the proposed gateline capacity, based upon the projected local passenger growth forecast at the station, with a clear demonstration that this broadly aligns with assumptions made within the Economic Case and, if not, does not undermine the case for investment
2. GRIP 4 Network Rail Approval in Principle; and
3. An understanding of what processes would be undertaken in the event of any further cost overruns, should they arise.

These conditions should be met at the earliest feasible date, but no later than 31st October 2020.

Cycle Hub and Office Space enhancements

4. Completion of the demand analysis study, with a clear demonstration of strong potential demand for the business start-up units that correlates with a strong probability of high occupancy levels of the units;

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5. GRIP 4 / GRIP 5 Network Rail Approval in Principle, as required for both the cycle hub and business start-up unit scheme element;
6. Evidence of completed commercial agreements between GWR and Network Rail for the necessary land transfer required to complete the business start-up units; and
7. Formal funding commitment from First Group and Network Rail for the match-funding identified by GWR, with a more detailed understanding of what processes would be undertaken in the event of any further cost overruns, should they arise.

These conditions should be met at the earliest feasible date, but no later than 30th November 2020.

Members discussed a number of aspects of the proposal and Councillor Jorgensen stated that she was not supportive of LGF funding being used for the Gate Line improvements. The station was owned by Network Rail and leased by GWR. The additional facilities had been identified as part of the wider redesign and enhancement of the station to ensure it had sufficient capacity to meet growing demand.

A number of members queried the office space element of the scheme and requested that the demand analysis study be carried out before the funding was agreed. The scheme promoter highlighted the importance of providing units to support local businesses, however, some members commented that the demand analysis should be carried out first so BLTB could understand how the space and revenue generated from the units would be used. It was agreed that the demand analysis study be carried out before the date set out in condition 4 and that an update be provided to BLTB at the meeting on 15th July 2020.

At the conclusion of the discussion, financial approval was given to the Gate Line enhancements and Cycle Hub elements of the scheme, subject to the conditions set out in the report. In relation to the Office Space enhancements, it was agreed that the demand analysis study be carried out with an update to be provided to BLTB on 15th July 2020 at which financial approval would be considered.

Resolved – That scheme 2.24 Newbury: Railway Station Addendum 1 Ticket Gate Line & Addendum 2 Cycle Hubs and Office Space enhancements be given conditional financial approval in the sum of £640,000 in 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out in paragraph 11 step 5 of the report and subject to final approval for the Office Space enhancements following completion of the demand analysis study to be provided to BLTB in July 2020; and the following conditions:

Gate Line Enhancements

1. Provide confirmation of the operational design horizon for the proposed gateline capacity, based upon the projected local

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passenger growth forecast at the station, with a clear demonstration that this broadly aligns with assumptions made within the Economic Case and, if not, does not undermine the case for investment

2. GRIP 4 Network Rail Approval in Principle; and
3. An understanding of what processes would be undertaken in the event of any further cost overruns, should they arise.

These conditions should be met at the earliest feasible date, but no later than 31st October 2020.

Cycle Hub and Office Space enhancements

4. Completion of the demand analysis study, with a clear demonstration of strong potential demand for the business start-up units that correlates with a strong probability of high occupancy levels of the units;
5. GRIP 4 / GRIP 5 Network Rail Approval in Principle, as required for both the cycle hub and business start-up unit scheme element;
6. Evidence of completed commercial agreements between GWR and Network Rail for the necessary land transfer required to complete the business start-up units; and
7. Formal funding commitment from First Group and Network Rail for the match-funding identified by GWR, with a more detailed understanding of what processes would be undertaken in the event of any further cost overruns, should they arise.

These conditions should be met at the earliest feasible date, but no later than 30th November 2020. The demand analysis study to be carried out more quickly with an update provided to BLTB in July 2020.

10. Financial Approval 2.45 Slough: Langley High Street/ Meadfield Road Junction Improvements Phase 1

A report was considered that sought to give conditional financial approval to scheme 2.45 Slough: Langley High Street / Meadfield Road Junction Improvements Phase 1. A sum of £1,324,000 was sought for the scheme which would seek to reduce delay to traffic on a key strategic link in anticipation of the significant volume of traffic likely to be redirected through Langley as a result of the closure of Hollow Hill Lane required by the construction of Western Rail Link to Heathrow.

The scheme was one of four planned phases to improve the corridor to address traffic and air quality issues. The Independent Assessor concluded that there was sufficient evidence to support the overall strategic and economic case for investment and that it would deliver very high value for money with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 9.3:1. Conditional approval was recommended subject to the following:

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1. Production of a revised, and more robust, assessment of scheme costs, post-preliminary scheme design; and
2. Formal confirmation (e.g. S151 Officer letter) to cover Slough Borough Council's funding allocation, along with confirmation that Slough Borough Council will cover any potential cost overruns.

These conditions should be met at the earliest feasible date, but no later than 31st August 2020.

Members asked the scheme promoter a number of questions including whether the scheme could be delivered within the estimated costs and the provision in the scheme to promote sustainable transport. The scheme promoter commented that one of the key aims of the scheme was to enable improvements to public transport and promote modal shift. In relation to the costs, it was noted that contractors were in place and delivery could commence quickly if financial approval was given.

At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed to give the scheme conditional financial approval.

Resolved – That scheme 2.45 Slough Langley High Street/ Meadfield Road Junction Improvements phase 1 be given conditional financial approval in the sum of £1,324,000 in 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out at paragraph 14 step 5 of the report, subject to meeting the following conditions:

- 1) Production of a revised, and more robust, assessment of scheme costs, post-preliminary scheme design; and
- 2) Formal confirmation (e.g. S151 Officer letter) to cover Slough Borough Council's funding allocation, along with confirmation that Slough Borough Council will cover any potential cost overruns.

These conditions should be met at the earliest feasible date, but no later than 31st August 2020.

11. Financial Approval: Scheme 2.38 Theale Railway Station upgrade

A report was considered that sought to give financial approval to scheme 2.38 Theale Railway Station Upgrade. A sum of £4,000,000 was sought for the scheme which would provide enhancements at Theale Station to improve the sustainable transport interchange, increase park and rail capacity and enhance customer facilities.

The scheme was jointly promoted by West Berkshire Council and GWR. It had a Benefit Cost Ratio of 3.3:1 and the Independent Assessor had recommended that approval be given subject to the following conditions:

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1. Further analysis of the impact the scheme will have upon decongestion of the highway network, including the number of trips removed from corridors leading into urban areas with known congested networks, which is sufficient to determine that the decongestion benefits will be higher than those currently presented within the Economic Case;
2. Full details of planning requirements for each individual scheme element, including when any necessary approvals or determinations will occur
3. GRIP 4 Network Rail Approval in Principle, as necessary to deliver the project and
4. Formal funding commitment from First Group and Network Rail for the match-funding identified by GWR, with a more detailed understanding of what processes would be undertaken in the event of any cost overruns, should they arise.

Members agreed that the scheme would contribute to the strategic objectives of the programme. At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed to give the scheme full financial approval. It was requested and agreed that an update be provided to the meeting in July 2020 on the progress of achieving the conditions.

Resolved – That scheme 2.38 Theale Railway Station Upgrade be given conditional financial approval in the sum of £4,000,000 over the period 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out at paragraph 11 step 5 of the report. The conditional approval was on the basis that the following conditions are met:

1. Further analysis of the impact the scheme will have upon decongestion of the highway network, including the number of trips removed from corridors leading into urban areas with known congested networks, which is sufficient to determine that the decongestion benefits will be higher than those currently presented within the Economic Case;
2. Full details of planning requirements for each individual scheme element, including when any necessary approvals or determinations will occur
3. GRIP 4 Network Rail Approval in Principle, as necessary to deliver the project and
4. Formal funding commitment from First Group and Network Rail for the match-funding identified by GWR, with a more detailed understanding of what processes would be undertaken in the event of any cost overruns, should they arise.

These conditions should be met at the earliest feasible date but no later than 31st October 2020.

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12. BLTB Forward Plan

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

The timescales for allocating the remaining Local Growth Fund was tight ahead of the meeting in July and scheme promoters were engage with the Independent Assessors at the earliest opportunity to ensure report deadlines were met.

Resolved – That the BLTB Forward Plan be noted.

13. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 15th July 2020, 4pm

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 15th July 2020 at 4pm. It was anticipated that it would also be held virtually in view of the current coronavirus restrictions.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.03 pm and closed at 5.32 pm)