

## **BERKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (BLTB)**

**REPORT TO:** BLTB

**DATE:** 15 July 2020

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Josie Wragg, Chief Executive, Slough Borough Council,  
lead officer to the BLTB

### **Item 17: Transport for the South East Proposal to government – letter of support**

#### ***Purpose of Report***

1. To endorse the attached letter of support for Transport for the South East (TfSE) and their Proposal to government.

#### ***Background***

2. TfSE published the consultation draft of the proposal to Government on 7 May 2019 for a period of 12 weeks. Prior to the formal consultation exercise, there had been extensive discussions with constituent authorities, LEPs, district and borough authorities and other stakeholders to inform the types of powers that TfSE might seek to support the delivery of the Transport Strategy.
3. During the twelve-week consultation, TfSE was required to engage with all constituent authorities, LEPs, neighbouring authorities and other appropriate stakeholders. In addition to the 16 constituent authorities and five LEPs, there are 16 neighbouring Transport Authorities that TfSE included in the formal consultation.
4. The consultation resulted in 98 responses from a wide range of stakeholders, including a number of local interest groups and member of the public. The overall findings of the consultation exercise are positive, with 94 respondents offering support for the principle of establishing a sub-national transport body for the south east. However, some of this support was conditional upon TfSE addressing concerns with the proposal and overall vision for the organisation.
5. The revised proposal, which was agreed at the September 2019 meeting of the TfSE Shadow Partnership Board, incorporated a number of changes, which can be summarised:
  - a. The 2050 vision has been updated following extensive consultation on the draft Transport Strategy. This is included in the final proposal and sets out the aspiration for the South East to be a leading global region for net zero carbon sustainable economic growth. This principle is embodied in one of the fifteen strategic priorities that underpin the vision.
  - b. Strengthening the opening narrative and strategic case to ensure that social inclusion and environmental protection, including reducing emissions, are clearly recognised as a priority for TfSE. This reflects the final Transport Strategy, including the revised vision, goals and objectives.

- c. The proposal highlights that the current governance arrangements for co-opted members are considered to work well and would strongly recommend that the Statutory Body would continue with them.
  - d. Clarification is provided around the principle of consent and the concurrent nature of the powers. Additionally, the principle of subsidiarity has been incorporated into the document to demonstrate that any decisions relating to the powers is made at the most relevant level and that, where possible, future aspirations will focus on drawing down powers from central government.
  - e. The bus franchising power has been removed from the proposal, with the emphasis placed on building stronger relationships with the bus operators and work with local authorities to ensure that services are operating in a way that supports the delivery of the Transport Strategy, e.g. smart and integrated ticketing at a regional (or wider) level.
  - f. The powers relating to rail have remained unchanged. However, TfSE is closely monitoring the outcomes of the William's Rail Review and will consider whether it should include provision to assume a role in contracting for rail services as it matures as an organisation. The current situation with the Covid-19 global pandemic is also likely to have an impact on the future of rail services.
6. It was agreed at the December 2019 meeting of the Shadow Partnership Board that TfSE should seek to submit the proposal to Government upon completion of the Transport Strategy, which will firmly set out the ways in which TfSE and the Department for Transport can work in partnership to implement the bold and ambitious approach included in the Strategy.
  7. Although there have been no further changes to the substantive sections of the proposal, specifically the powers and responsibilities and governance sections, it has been necessary to update the opening narrative of the proposal so that it reflects that the Covid-19 global pandemic will have upon the economy of the south east and travel behaviours.

## **Engagement with Government**

8. TfSE Board members have previously agreed to seek the advice and views of the Department for Transport (DfT) prior to making any formal submission for statutory status. TfSE has developed positive relationships with the DfT at both ministerial level and with civil servants.
9. There were a number of discussions between TfSE and George Freeman, the previous Minister of State, including his attendance at TfSE's 'Connecting the South East' event in Farnborough to launch the TfSE draft Transport Strategy. The minister was complementary of the way in which TfSE has operated, recognising the importance that has been placed on partnership working, the role TfSE has played in providing a collective single voice on priorities and the organisations lean and efficient structures. He was also supportive of the TfSE priorities to have a modern integrated public transport system and future proofing against climate change impacts.
10. As a result of the ministerial reshuffle in February 2020 responsibility for STBs

has transferred to Baroness Vere of Norbiton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Transport. The Chair of TfSE has written to Baroness Vere requesting a meeting to discuss TfSE's priorities, including its ambition to gain statutory status. Although this letter has been acknowledged and welcomed, it has not been possible to progress a meeting with Baroness Vere due to the current situation with Covid-19.

11. The TfSE team remain in close contact with the civil servants at DfT and will aim to progress a meeting between the Chair of TfSE and the ministerial team at the earliest opportunity.

### **Formal Consent and Letters of Support**

12. It was agreed at the December 2019 meeting of the TfSE Shadow Partnership Board that TfSE should seek to submit the proposal to Government upon completion of the Transport Strategy, which will firmly set out the ways in which TfSE and the DfT can work in partnership to implement the bold and ambitious approach included in the strategy.
13. The legislation requires that a new sub-national transport body will be promoted by, and have the consent of, its constituent authorities. Formal consent is required before the Shadow Partnership Board approves the final proposal. It was agreed by the TfSE Shadow Partnership Board in December that all constituent authorities should aim to take the draft proposal through their relevant committee and sign off structures by spring 2020, however this has been delayed by changes to committee timescales due to Covid-19. TfSE has received the formal letters conforming necessary consent from the majority of constituent authorities. Two further constituent authorities will be taking the proposal through their relevant governance processes in the coming weeks.
14. Although other partners, such as LEPs, district and boroughs and protected landscapes are not required to offer formal consent for the creation of a statutory body, a number of partners have submitted letters of support. These letters recognise that by working strategically with local transport authorities, local planning authorities, LEPs, operators, delivery bodies and government, TfSE will be uniquely positioned to influence how and where money is invested to best deliver transport improvements that benefit people and businesses in the south east and across the entire country.

### **Timescales and Proposed Communications Approach**

15. The draft Proposal to Government was widely supported during the consultation exercise and there is recognition from stakeholders that the creation of a sub-national transport body would benefit the south east area. As such, it is proposed that it should be submitted to Government, subject to the formal consent from all constituent authorities, along with the final transport strategy in September 2020.
16. It is intended that TfSE will use the period between its Shadow Partnership

Board meeting in July to the submission in September to build a communications and engagement campaign. This will be focused on gaining support from MPs, preparing relevant communications materials, such as website, social media, etc, and ensuring that stakeholders have access to a 'toolkit' to enable them to lobby/advocate on behalf of TfSE.

17. Working with TfSE Board members, a planned approach for MP engagement will be developed and will utilise a series of virtual meetings to share key messages. This will form the basis of a campaign which will run until spring 2021 and will maximise the opportunity for TfSE to make a compelling case for the funding and powers it needs to deliver its transport strategy and help drive economic recovery in the South East and across the UK. An update email was recently issued to all MPs in the TfSE area and a number of meeting requests have been received as a result of this.
18. The draft Proposal to Government was widely supported during the consultation exercise and there is recognition from stakeholders that the creation of a sub-national transport body would benefit the south east area. The proposal to Government has been updated to reflect the feedback received from the consultation exercise and to fully align with the transport strategy.
19. Formal consent has been provided from constituent authorities, with two further letters of consent to be received by later summer. In addition, letters of support have been received from various partners, including district and borough authorities, local enterprise partnerships and operators.
20. It is proposed that, subject to the consent of all constituent authorities, the TfSE Shadow Partnership Board should submit the final proposal to government in September 2020, alongside the final version of the transport strategy.

### **Conclusion**

21. Whilst all six of the Berkshire Local Authorities, as constituent authorities, have already signed and submitted their letters of consent regarding the proposal to government to TfSE, the attached letter of support from the Berkshire Local Transport Body will further endorse Berkshire's support for the vision and objectives of Transport for the South East.

## Appendix 1

Cllr Keith Glazier  
Chair, Transport for the South East

By email: [tfse@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:tfse@eastsussex.gov.uk)

15th July 2020

Dear Cllr Glazier,

### Transport for the South East (TfSE) – Proposal to government for statutory status

We write on behalf of the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) which was established in March 2013 in response to the Department for Transport's wish to devolve Local Transport Major Schemes Capital Funding to local control. The LEP Forum, which oversees and scrutinises the LEP, has agreed to continue with the BLTB, as the competent body to a) prioritise and b) implement transport capital schemes on its behalf. The Body consists of six elected members (usually the lead member for transport or related portfolio), and six private sector representatives recruited and appointed by the LEP. It supervises the work of independent assessors that scrutinise transport schemes in accordance with the DfT approved Assurance Framework.

We confirm that the BLTB fully supports TfSE's proposal to government for statutory status, both in terms of the strategic and economic case it sets out and the specific powers and functions TfSE has requested.

We have been closely involved with the development of the proposal and the associated transport strategy. We believe that the powers requested will enable TfSE and its partners to deliver the vision at the heart of the transport strategy, helping boost our economy, improving quality of life and delivering a net-zero carbon future for our region. They will also ensure the South East can play the fullest possible role in supporting the UK's economic recovery from the effects of COVID-19.

The South East is a vital motor for the UK's economy, contributing more than any other region outside London, and is the UK's principal international gateway for people and goods. The formation of a statutory sub-national transport body for the South East will enable us to speak with one voice on our strategic transport priorities, ensuring a better connected, more prosperous and more sustainable South East.

By working strategically with local enterprise partnerships, local highway authorities, local planning authorities, transport operators, delivery bodies and government, TfSE will be uniquely positioned to influence how and where money is invested for the benefit of people and businesses in our region and across the entire country.

We look forward to continuing to work as part of TfSE.

Yours sincerely etc.

Signed on behalf of The Berkshire Local Transport Body