

**Berkshire Local Transport Body – Meeting held on Thursday, 11th March, 2021.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Page (in the chair)	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Anderson	Slough Borough Council
Councillor Brunel-Walker	Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Clark (from 4.09pm)	RBWM
Councillor Jorgensen	Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Somner	West Berkshire Council
Stuart Atkinson	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Laura Fitzgerald	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Malcolm Kempton	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Bob Mountain	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Nigel Nawacki	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Simon Ratcliffe	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

**Also present under Rule 30:-** Councillor Atkinson (Bracknell Forest Council)

**Apologies for Absence:-** None

**PART 1**

**46. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

**47. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th November 2020**

**Resolved –** That the minutes of the meeting of the Berkshire Local Transport Body held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**48. Briefing Note - TVB/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.

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

A report was considered that updated on the overall schemes approved from funding via Local Growth Deal, Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP) and the Getting Building Fund (GBF).

*(Councillor Clark joined the meeting)*

The total funding for schemes in the programme was £174m and the figures in Table 2 of the report showed the breakdown of funding year on year and by funding stream. Funding from Local Growth Deals and BRRP would come to an end in March 2021. There was £2.1m funding from GBF in 2021/22. It was highlighted that the figures in Table 3 showed that nearly 50% of the total spend was on directly sustainable projects such as mass rapid transit (MRT) schemes, park and ride and cycling infrastructure. A member asked which category cycling schemes came under in Table 3. It was responded that cycling would be under 'other', but that in future the LEP would seek to improve the management reporting of sustainable schemes so they could be identified more clearly. Some MRT schemes would also include measures to promote cycling.

BLTB noted the capital swaps between authorities which utilised the LEPs freedoms and flexibilities to manage the funds in the final year of the LGF programme. A member queried if the level of capital swaps was in line with expectations and whether there were any lessons to be learned about the timescales for project delivery to ensure they were completed before the end of the programme. It was responded that capital swaps had been higher than originally envisaged and that this was largely due to Covid-19 delays which had pushed back some completion dates and necessitated more adjustments than had been anticipated in the final year of the LGF programme. Some of the rail projects which tended to more complex came later in the programme. The LEP would carry of a review to learn the lessons for future programmes.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

**Resolved** – That the progress on the schemes previously given programme entry status as set out in the report be noted.

#### **50. Allocation of the unallocated Getting Building Fund monies**

A report was considered that sought approval to allocate the remaining £450,000 of GBF money to a Bracknell transport project. It was proposed that an increment be made to an already approved LGF project, scheme 2.37 Bracknell: A322 A329 Corridor Improvements.

BLTB noted that the £450,000 had become available as it had been returned to the pot following a reassessment of a previously approved skills project. GBF required projects to be fully delivered by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 and funding needed to be allocated quickly to ensure delivery within this timescale.

The approved pipeline of schemes had been agreed by BLTB in November 2020 and discussions had been held with owners of the prioritised project list to ascertain which could be delivered within the tight timescale and the available funding. The Bracknell A322 Smart Corridor project ranked 4<sup>th</sup> out of the 16 prioritised project but was deemed to be the top ranking project that meet the criteria. It built upon the current LGF scheme 2.37 and it was therefore proposed that the additional funds be issued as a project extension

rather than seeking programme entry for a new scheme. If agreed, a full business case was expected to come back to BLTB in July.

The project sponsor commented that this was one of last remaining major pinchpoints in the corridor and would improve access points and safety. After due consideration BLTB agreed the recommendations.

**Resolved –**

- (a) That the remaining £450,000 of GBF money be allocated to a transport project that would contribute to the implementation of the Recovery & Renewal Plan (RRP) and Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).
- (b) That it be agreed that scheme 2.37 Bracknell: A322-A329 Corridor Improvements receive an additional allocation of £450,000 GBF, to take the total funding allocated for the scheme to £850,000. A full business case, reviewed by the LEPs independent assessor, Hatch Regeneris, would be presented for financial approval at the July 2021 BLTB.

**51. Update: Scheme 2.24: Newbury Station Improvements - Business Start-up units re-profiled**

A report was considered that updated on revised design proposals and a reduction in outputs for the business start-up units within scheme 2.24 Newbury Railway Station Improvement project.

The Newbury Railway Station Improvement Scheme included provision of a two-storey building on Platform 1 intended to support business start-ups. The project was being delivered in three main phases and the business start up units were in the final phase. The benefits of delivering the start-up units were attributed to the new employment generated on the site, although it was noted that the original 2018 full business case did not quantify these benefits. Development of the scheme and the completion of electrification works had led to design changes with a swap of the location of the building with the planned location of a cycle hub on the site of a Network Rail compound in the southern car park.

The business case for the additional funding envisaged the amount of lettable space as 610m<sup>2</sup>, although the specification was undefined. The subsequent development of the scheme, informed by the outcome a demand analysis study and interest expressed from potential tenants, had led to a design which had a usable floor space of 280m<sup>2</sup>. The main reason was that the design was now for a single storey structure rather than the two-storey originally proposed. The final design may include the option of future-proofing to enable a second storey to be added at a later stage. Whilst members were supportive of this in principle it was recognised that adding a second floor in the future may be impractical due to the disruption it would cause tenants.

BLTB was informed that whilst the outputs for the start-up unit element of the scheme had been reduced the project would still deliver high value for money with a benefit cost ratio in excess of 2:1 and the scheme was therefore still fit for purpose. The demand analysis carried out by Vail Williams showed there was encouraging demand for the units which would make an important contribution to the post-Covid economic recovery. It was also noted that the funding could not now be redeployed elsewhere and the scheme and wider station improvements would still meet the strategic priorities. BLTB was therefore asked to note the changes to the scheme whilst recognising that it still delivered high value for money.

Representatives from West Berkshire Council and GWR commented on the current position. GWR stated that the wider scheme was progressing well but that a combination of Covid-19 impacts and rising material costs had contributed to the deliverability of the second storey of the business units. Members asked a number of questions about the recipient of the commercial rental income from the units and the calculation of the increased number of jobs from the project. It was responded that GWR would manage lettings for the units and they were in discussion with Network Rail about the revenue split, which would also be required for ongoing maintenance. The methodology for calculating the number of jobs created was based on the Webtag assessment formula.

At the conclusion of the discussion the BLTB noted the changes to the original specification and recognised that the overall scheme still delivered high value for money.

**Resolved** – That the changes to the original specification of the scheme be noted, whilst recognising that the overall scheme still delivered high value for money.

## **52. Further update to BLTB on One Year scheme evaluations**

Further to the update to BLTB in November 2020, an update was provided that set out the current position regarding the one year scheme evaluations that had been delayed due to Covid-19.

Evaluations at one and five years after schemes opening was an important part of the BLTB Assurance Framework. The schemes due for evaluation were:

- 2.21 – Slough: Langley Station Access
- 2.10 – Slough: A332 Improvements
- 2.11 and 2.12 – Reading: Phases 1 & 2 South Reading MRT
- 2.15 – Bracknell: Martin's Heron roundabout

The continuing impact of Covid-19 had meant that gathering robust data for scheme assessments and evaluations was difficult and members were asked to agree to defer the reports that were due until meaningful evaluation could be conducted. It was hoped some or all reports could be presented in July

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2021. BLTB noted the update and agreed to receive the evaluation reports as soon as they were available.

**Resolved** – That the update be noted and that BLTB receive the evaluation reports due at a future meeting.

### **53. 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.

### **54. Date of Next Meeting - 15th July 2021**

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.02 pm and closed at 4.43 pm)