

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

Present:-

Councillor Anderson	Slough Borough Council
Councillor Brunel-Walker	Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Clark	RBWM
Councillor Jorgensen	Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Page (Chair)	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Somner	West Berkshire Council
Stuart Atkinson	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Laura Fitzgerald	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Bob Mountain	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Nigel Nawacki	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Simon Ratcliffe	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

Also present:- Councillors Atkinson and Turrell
Adele Taylor – RBWM (LEP Accountable Body S151)

Apologies for Absence:- Malcolm Kempton

PART 1

11. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

12. Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th July 2021

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Berkshire Local Transport Body held on 15th July 2021 be approved as a correct record.

13. 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.

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

A report was received that set out the progress of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Growth Deal schemes.

A correction to Table 1 of the report was noted, in that the sum for the Getting Building Fund (GBF) should be £3.8m not £2.1m as stated and that the reporting period was 2015/16 to 2021/22.

Berkshire Local Transport Body - 11.11.21

Table 1 showed the total Local Growth Deal funding for the period was £137.3m and £36m of BRRP funding for the two years of 2018/19 and 2019/20. The £3.8m GBF included the £1.6m for the Slough Langley High Street Phase 3 scheme and an additional £450k for Bracknell A332/A329 Corridor Improvements as approved at the last meeting. Table 2 provided a breakdown of the funding, including the £1.5m GBF funding in 2021/22. The figures in Table 3 set out the funding breakdown by type of scheme, and included the further clarity previously requested by Members such as active travel, regeneration etc. It was noted that 46% of spend had been on sustainable projects such as Mass Rapid Transit and rail & cycle schemes, which equated to more than £80m in total.

Updates were provided for uncompleted schemes by exception and the following was noted:

- 2.01 – Newbury: King’s Road Link Road – there had been an outstanding planning issue to resolve. Work had commenced in September and was on track for completion.
- 2.27 – Maidenhead Town Centre: Missing Links – there had been some minor slippage but the scheme was nearing completion.
- 2.31 – Slough: Stoke Road Area Regeneration – the scheme was progressing well, including work on the northern forecourt of the station. The target completion date remained March 2022.
- 2.40 – Windsor: Town Centre Package – there had been a re-tender for the main contractor due to increased cost but the scheme remained on track.
- 2.45/2.26 – Slough: Langley High Street – expected completion had been delayed to March 2022 due to utility issues.
- 2.34 – Slough MRT Phase 2 – the BRRP scheme was progressing with highway widening and junction work progressing well. As previously reported, it was expected that the Park & Ride element would be resubmitted and this was expected to come to the next meeting in March 2022.
- TVB Smart City Cluster – there had been a slight delay which was expected to delay completion from December 2021 to January 2022. The scheme had won a national digital innovation award from the Municipal Journal.

A Member commented on the fact that a number of schemes had experienced delays due to utility issues and BLTB discussed whether any lessons could be learned for future schemes. Assurance was provided that the relevant pre-commencement preparation and searches had been carried out. Members discussed the engagement with utility companies and possible further protocols to strengthen due diligence. It was recognised that it was inevitable

that issues would be found once construction works started for many projects. It was agreed that Officers would give the matter further consideration to explore whether any further steps could be taken for future schemes.

Resolved – That the update be noted.

15. 2.10 Slough: A332 Windsor Road Improvements - One Year Evaluation Report

A report was considered on the one-year impact report for scheme 2.10 Slough: A332 Windsor Road Improvement Scheme.

The independent assessors report at Appendix B to the report concluded that Slough Borough Council's one-year impact report was well constructed and balanced, making good use of the available evidence.

It was noted that works on the scheme had started in January 2016 and there had been some delays which were attributed to utility issues and the replacement of the main contractor in 2017. There had been a slight cost overrun of £150,000 from the initial estimate of £5 million. Data had been collected prior to construction, mid-scheme and post-construction. The early evidence indicated a slight reduction in journey times at AM peak and a greater reduction at the PM peak. More detailed data would be available for the five-year impact report.

The scheme promoter highlighted that in addition to the quantitative benefits the scheme had already contributed positively to the regeneration of Windsor Road, with significant new recent and planned developments.

BLTB noted the report of the scheme promoter and independent assessor.

Resolved – That the reports from the scheme promoter and the independent assessor be noted.

16. 2.12 Reading: South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) phases 1 & 2 - One Year Evaluation Report

A report was considered on the one-year impact report for scheme 2.12 Reading: South Reading Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Phases 1 and 2.

The independent assessor had commented that Reading Borough Council's evaluation report had been comprehensive and detailed. The evaluation report focused on the impact the corridor improvements had had in supporting improved connectivity and economic development, particularly for key employment and housing locations in Reading. The Council's report highlighted that during 2017-18, the first year of the schemes implementation, that approximately 3,500 dwellings and 32,550 sqm of business/industrial floorspace had been developed.

Berkshire Local Transport Body - 11.11.21

The data considered in the one-year evaluation showed that Phases 1 and 2 of the MRT scheme had enabled a faster, more reliable and more frequent bus service along the A33 corridor with more buses recorded and fewer delays. The scheme promoter explained that this report covered only the first two phases of a much wider scheme, with the fourth phase almost nearing completion. The evaluation of the early phases could support funding bids for future phases particularly as there was evidence that congestion in the corridor was increasing again which would impact on the reliability of bus services.

A Member suggested that it would be useful to see bus patronage figures in future evaluation reports, although it was recognised that Covid-19 had had a significant impact on patronage. BLTB discussed the prospects for the recovery of public transport usage and it was noted that there were variable trends. Some services had already returned to pre-pandemic levels, however, others such as park and ride services for town centre locations remained below pre-Covid levels reflecting the changing economic patterns.

The reports were noted.

Resolved – That the reports from the scheme promoter and the independent assessor be noted.

17. 2.15 Bracknell: Martins Heron Roundabout - One Year Evaluation Report

A report was considered on the one-year impact report for scheme 2.15 Bracknell: Martins Heron Roundabout.

The independent assessor had concluded that Bracknell Forest Council's evaluation report had been well-constructed and balanced, despite the fact the fundamental change to usage patterns made the one-year impact report difficult. A comparison of the impacts between 2013 and 2021 demonstrated the success of the scheme. There was evidence of reduced delays associated with traffic congestion, for example, in 2013 it took on average 13 minutes to travel eastbound at morning peak and by 2021 this had reduced to 9 minutes. Lower levels of congestion had helped to reduce the level of harmful exhaust fumes and the improved junctions had helped to encourage and promote accessibility and sustainable modes of transport.

The scheme promoter commented that the investment had had a very positive impact now that it had been completed. BLTB noted the reports.

Resolved – That the reports from the scheme promoter and the independent assessor be noted.

18. 2.21 Slough: Langley Station Access - One Year Evaluation Report

A report was considered on the one-year impact report for scheme 2.21 Slough: Langley Station Access.

Berkshire Local Transport Body - 11.11.21

The independent assessor concluded that the Slough Borough Council evaluation report had been well constructed. The scheme had enhanced facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. The Council's evaluation stated that the infrastructure and supporting measures had created a safer, more attractive area of public realm, improving social inclusion and accessibility to Langley station. BLTB noted the reports.

Members discussed the overall conclusions from the four one-year impact assessments considered at the meeting. It was recognised that Covid had had significant impacts on the ability to evaluate the schemes against the criteria on which they were approved and it was suggested that officers work with the independent assessor to look at different metrics which would help assess both the short term impacts over a year and longer term five-year impacts.

Resolved – That the reports from the scheme promoter and the independent assessor be noted.

19. Transport for the South East - Subscription Report Update

A report was considered that sought agreement to continue the annual subscription to Transport for the South East (TfSE).

BLTB had agreed in November 2020 to renew the annual subscription to TfSE of £58,000 for 2020/21, with the amount to be split 6 ways between the constituent authorities. In its role as accountable body for the Berkshire Local Transport Body, Slough Borough Council collected contributions from BLTB members and passed the subscriptions to East Sussex County Council, the accountable body for TfSE.

TfSE was focused on the delivery of a Strategic Investment Plan (SIP), which would provide a blueprint for investment across the South East for the next 30 years. It was envisaged would be published for consultation in June 2022 with the final SIP to be put the TfSE board for agreement in March 2023. TfSE would be giving a presentation on its current work at the forthcoming Berkshire Strategic Transport (Members) Forum.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the recommendation to continue with an annual, pan-Berkshire subscription was agreed.

Resolved – That the renewal of annual BLTB subscription of £58,000 for Transport for the South East to the cover the period 2021/22 be agreed, with the amount to be split 6 ways between the constituent authorities.

20. BLTB Forward Plan

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

Berkshire Local Transport Body - 11.11.21

Resolved – That the BLTB Forward Plan be noted.

21. Date of Next Meeting - 10th March 2022

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 10th March 2022.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.00 pm and closed at 4.57 pm)