

Berkshire Local Transport Body – Meeting held on Thursday, 13th July, 2023.

Present:-

Councillor Bedi	Slough Borough Council
Councillor Brock	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Fishwick	Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Gaines	West Berkshire Council
Councillor Gillbe	Bracknell Forest Council
Stuart Atkinson	Berkshire LEP
Laura Fitzgerald	Berkshire LEP

Also present:- Andrew Vallance (RBWM, LEP accountable body)

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Hill and Nigel Nawacki

PART 1

1. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

2. Introduction to Berkshire Local Transport Body - Its Role and Purpose

The Vice Chair for 2022/23, Laura Fitzgerald, introduced a paper that summarised the role and purpose of Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB).

BLTB had been formally established in 2013 in response to a request from the Department for Transport (DfT) to oversee funding for major transport schemes devolved to LTBs from April 2015. It was a partnership between the LEP and the six local authorities in Berkshire. It operated in accordance with guidance from DfT as set out in the BLTB Assurance Framework which was kept under regular review.

The role of BLTB in managing the programme of transport schemes funding through the Local Growth Fund, Business Rates Retention Pilot Capital Funds and Getting Building Fund was summarised and it was noted that the Government had changed policy direction in recent years with a move to centrally held funding for future infrastructure schemes and devolution of funds directly to local authorities through national competitions such as the Levelling Up Fund.

Other roles included advocacy and engagement with bodies such as Transport for the South East to help shape and influence transport strategy and remain important and the value of the BLTB going forward will be to present a pan-Berkshire view on strategic transport issues. The capital schemes in the programme overseen by BLTB were due to be completed by March 2024. The future role of BTLB would continue to evolve.

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BLTB had been chaired by Councillor Tony Page from Reading Borough Council since 2013. Councillor Page had recently become the Mayor of Reading and had therefore stepped down as a member of BLTB. The LEP had arranged for a gift to be presented to Councillor Page for the significant contribution he had made over the past ten years and BLTB agreed a vote of thanks for his service.

Resolved – That the introduction to BLTB and a vote of thanks to Councillor Page be noted.

3. Election of Chair for 2023/24

Nominations were invited for the Chair of BLTB for the forthcoming municipal year. The Founding Document stated that a Local Authority Member should chair BLTB.

Councillor Brock was proposed by Councillor Fishwick and seconded by Councillor Gillbe.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Brock was elected as Chair for the next year.

Resolved – That Councillor Brock be elected as Chair of BLTB for the 2023/24 municipal year.

(Councillor Brock in the Chair for the remainder of the meeting)

4. Election of Vice Chair for 2023/24

Nominations were invited for the Vice-Chair of BLTB for the forthcoming municipal year. It was confirmed that the Founding Document of the BLTB required that the Vice-Chair be from the Local Enterprise Partnership members.

Laura Fitzgerald was proposed by Nigel Nawacki in absentia, and seconded by Stuart Atkinson.

There being no other nominations, Laura Fitzgerald was elected as Vice-Chair for the next year.

Resolved – That Laura Fitzgerald be elected as Vice-Chair of BLTB for the 2023/24 municipal year.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th March 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

6. Thames Valley Berkshire Capital Programme Update

Berkshire LEPs Head of the Programme Management, Susan Jones, introduced a report that set out the progress of transport projects funded through the various LEP capital infrastructure programmes. BLTB reviewed progress on each of the uncompleted schemes.

- 2.01 Newbury: King's Road Link Road – the scheme was now on track to be completed before Christmas 2023.
- 2.24 Newbury: Railway Station Improvements – final works were underway to complete the business units and the scheme was on track for completion.
- 2.31 Slough: Stoke Road Area Regeneration – the majority of the works had been completed, although there was a slight delay as new traffic signals were awaited for two of the upgraded junctions.
- 2.32 Maidenhead: Housing Sites Enabling Works Phase 1 – the scheme was now due to be completed by December 2023.
- 2.35 Reading West Station Upgrade – good progress continued to be made and it was now anticipated that the scheme would be completed during August 2023.
- 2.38 Theale Station Park and Rail Upgrade – this was the only 'red' rated scheme left in the programme and it was expected not to be completed until December 2024. It was recognised that it was an important project with a strong BCR. The LEP was in discussion with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) about the timescale, to manage the small risk regarding the funding for the scheme, and BLTB were informed that DLUHC were said to be content with progress.
- 2.40 Windsor: Town Centre Package – good progress had been made and the scheme promoter currently expected it to be completed earlier than the January 2024 date noted in the report. The LEP would be informed of the current anticipated completion date.
- 2.34 Slough: MRT Phase 2 (Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP) funded) – the cycle route was still to be completed but work was due to start shortly. The main junction works had been completed.

The new BRRP capital projects were all currently rated 'green'.

BTLB noted the scheme updates provided.

The LEP Chief Executive, Alison Webster, highlighted that this would be the final meeting that Susan Jones would be attending as she was taking up a new position at Reading Borough Council. BLTB placed on record its thanks to Ms Jones for the contribution she had made to the successful management of the LEPs transport programmes.

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

7. Five Year and One Year Evaluation Reports

A report was received on the impact reports that were due. It was noted that a less intensive approach towards the impact reports had been agreed by BLTB in July 2022 to reflect the reduction in reporting requirements from government whilst still demonstrating the value of investment in infrastructure.

BLTB considered the five-year impact report for scheme 2.07 – Bracknell: Coral Reef Roundabout and the one-year impact report for scheme 2.37 – Bracknell: A322 A329 Corridor Improvements (Sports Centre Roundabout and Birch Hill Junction Upgrade).

In relation to Coral Reef Roundabout it was noted that the report demonstrated the scheme had delivered improved journey times and a reduction in congestion. It was considered to have been a successful scheme. In relation to the A322 – A329 Corridor Improvements the scheme had been delivered on time and close to budget. The report demonstrated the positive impacts the scheme had had and future monitoring would take place to evaluate whether the benefits were sustained.

Two further evaluation reports had been due at the meeting. The South Wokingham Distributor Road- Eastern Gateway was now expected to come to BLTB in November 2023. Coppid Beech Park & Ride was yet to open due to a lack of demand therefore the evaluation would take place circa one-year after the scheme was up and running, with the specific reporting timescale to be agreed with Wokingham BC.

The report was noted.

Resolved –

- (a) That the five-year impact report for scheme 2.07 Bracknell: Coral Reef Roundabout be noted.
- (b) That the one-year impact report for scheme 2.37 Bracknell: A332-A329 Corridor Improvements – Sports Centre Roundabout and Birch Hill Junction Upgrade be noted.
- (c) That it be noted that one-year impact reports for schemes 2.36 Wokingham: Coppid Beech Park & Ride and 2.42 South Wokingham Distributor Road, Eastern Gateway, were due but awaited.

8. Transport for the South East - Representation on Partnership Board and Intra-Authority Agreement

A report was considered that summarised the work of Transport for the South East (TfSE); sought agreement for the future representation of Berkshire on the TfSE Partnership Board; and approval of the Inter-Authority Agreement.

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Berkshire currently had a single representative on the TfSE Partnership Board and Councillor Tony Page, former chair of BLTB, had been the representative and had served as vice-chair of the Partnership Board. Nominations were sought for a new representative and it was agreed that Councillor Brock would be the Berkshire representative with Councillor Fishwick as the deputy representative.

Approval was sought to delegate authority to the lead officer for BLTB, Stephen Brown, who was the Chief Executive of BLTBs accountable body, Slough Borough Council, to sign an amended TfSE Intra-Authority Agreement (IAA). The background to the IAA was explained and it was noted that BLTB had originally approved it in 2018. As part of a general governance review, the IAA had been reviewed and TfSE wished to include a new Hold Harmless clause in the agreement. This new clause asked all constituent authorities to agree to hold harmless the lead authority, East Sussex County Council, in respect of any liabilities that could arise. Officers considered the proposed amendment to be reasonable and recommended that delegated authority to sign the amended IAA be given, subject to final legal sign off. This was agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That BLTB representation on the TfSE Partnership Board be agreed to be Councillor Brock as the representative with Councillor Fishwick as deputy representative.
- (b) That Stephen Brown, Chief Executive of Slough Borough Council (BLTBs accountable body) be authorised to sign the amended TfSE Intra-Authority Agreement on behalf of BLTB.

9. Provisional Dates of future meetings

The dates of future scheduled meetings of BLTB were noted as:

- 9th November 2023.
- 7th March 2024.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.01 pm and closed at 4.46 pm)