

Berkshire Local Transport Body – Meeting held on Thursday, 9th March, 2023.

Present:-

Councillor Page (Chair)	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Brunel-Walker (from 4.36pm)	Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Fishwick	Wokingham Borough Council
Councillor Haseler	RBWM
Councillor Nazir	Slough Borough Council
Councillor Somner	West Berkshire Council
Stuart Atkinson	Berkshire LEP
Laura Fitzgerald	Berkshire LEP

Also present:- Councillor Atkinson (Bracknell Forest Council)
Andrew Vallance (RBWM, LEP accountable body)

Apologies for Absence:- None received.

PART 1

20. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

21. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10th November 2022

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2022 be approved as a correct record.

22. Briefing Note - TVB/BLTB 'How We Work'

Members noted a briefing note that summarised the process by which 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.

23. Thames Valley Berkshire Capital Programme Update

A report was considered on the progress of schemes funded through the Growth Deals, Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP) and the transport element of the Getting Building Fund (GBF).

In addition to the detailed report, scheme promoters provided verbal updates on the live schemes:

Business Rates Retention Pilot funded schemes:

- 2.32 Maidenhead: Housing Sites Enabling Works Phase 1 – designs were progressing for the new junctions and the scheme was moving closer to delivery, which was due to be completed by December 2023.

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- 2.34 Slough: MRT Phase 2 – designs for the final elements of the scheme were being prepared with the commencement of works a few months away. Completion was due by March 2024 and the LEP Chief Executive highlighted that this was the final date for LEPs to complete delivery of their capital programmes and it was vital that schemes were delivered by then as funding would not be available after that date.

Local Growth Fund schemes:

- 2.01 Newbury: King's Road Link Road – the highways works had been disrupted by a fractured gas pipe but work was now back on site and due to complete later in March 2023.
- 2.24 Newbury: Railway Station Improvements – good progress had been made with the business growth units nearing completion and scheme was due for completion in March 2023.
- 2.29 Wokingham: Winnersh Triangle Park & Ride – work was progressing well and the scheme was nearing completion. Delivery was not contingent on the diversion of the water main and it was likely the scheme would be completed ahead of the scheduled date of July 2023.
- 2.31 Slough: Stoke Road Area Regeneration – the railway station element was nearly complete and junction works were on site, with completion due in May 2023.
- 2.35 Reading West Station Upgrade – there had been some delays due to utility works and additional railway approval processes. The scheme promoter indicated that it was not likely to complete by May 2023 and it was agreed to amend the completion date to July 2023.
- 2.38 Theale Station Park and Rail Upgrade – the schemes risk rating was Amber Red. The new footbridge was due to complete in the summer and the contract for the car park and forecourt was yet to be procured. The completion date was currently expected to be December 2024, after the March 2024 deadline. West Berkshire Council as the scheme promoter along with GWR and Network Rail had been asked to review the programme to ascertain if an earlier completion date could be achieved and to prioritise the LGF spend against other sources, as it was not possible to extend the spend deadline. It was agreed that contact be made with the local Members of Parliament who had taken an interest in the scheme to make representations to seek to bring greater clarity to the delivery timescale.
- 2.40 Windsor: Town Centre Package – the retendering exercise had been completed with a new contractor due to start work imminently. The scheme as due for completion in December 2023.

The report was noted.

Resolved – That the progress made on the schemes previously given programme entry status be noted.

24. One Year Evaluation Reports - Status Update

A report was considered the summarised the future programme of one-year and five-year impact reports.

It had been agreed by BLTB in July 2022 that a less intensive approach be taken towards the impact reports to reflect the reduction in reporting requirements from government whilst still demonstrating the value of investment in infrastructure.

The table in paragraph 9 of the report detailed the reports received to date; those overdue and the due dates for future impact reports. At the request of the Chair, it was agreed that an update be provided via email or at the next meeting on the position regarding the overdue impact reports:

- 2.03 Newbury: London Road Industrial Estate (five year)
- 2.05 Newbury: Sandford Park (one year)
- 2.07 Bracknell: Coral Reed Roundabout (five year)
- 2.16 Maidenhead: Station Access (one year)
- 2.17 Slough: A355 route (five year)
- 2.19 Bracknell: Town Centre Regeneration Infrastructure (five year)

The one-year impact report for scheme 2.36 Wokingham: Coppid Beech Park and Ride was listed as being due in July 2023, but Councillor Fishwick highlighted that the park and ride had not opened and the impact report should therefore be rescheduled.

The LEP Chief Executive commented that the one-year impact reports were not a government requirement but were good practice to help identify issues and learn lessons for future schemes in the programme. As there was no further government funding allocated, BLTB may wish to reconsider whether to carry out one-year impact reports for every scheme as part of its review of future activity.

Resolved –

- (a) That the future schedule of one and five-year impact reports be noted.
- (b) That Members be updated via email or a report to the next meeting on the position regarding the overdue impact reports.

25. BRRP fund - Transport related expressions of interest - Process

A report was considered that outlined the process that had been used to develop a programme of projects to be considered for delivery in 2023/24 utilising the remaining Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP) funding.

The background and the assessment process undertaken was summarised. Schemes would need to be delivered by March 2024. The schemes submitted following the issuing of the capital prospectus in December 2022

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had been assessed by staff from the LEP and the scores moderated and finalised.

The moderated list would be reviewed by the Berkshire Strategic Transport (Members) Forum that immediately followed the BLTB and the views expressed would be passed to local authority Chief Executives who would take the final decision as the funding was from rate retained monies. The update was noted.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

26. Response to the APPG for South East Call for Evidence - Transport Infrastructure

A report was received that enclosed a submission to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the South East call for evidence on transport infrastructure.

The APPG had launched an inquiry into transport infrastructure on 1st February 2023 and it was considered to be a good opportunity to advocate for investment in infrastructure in the Thames Valley to support the local economy. A joint Berkshire submission from the LEP, local authorities and BLTB was considered to be the best approach and the response set out in the Appendix to the report was agreed by the local authorities and BLTB Chair and submitted by the 24th February deadline. The key issues raised in the submission were outlined.

Meetings would be held as part of the inquiry which would provide an opportunity to present the evidence in person. The submission was noted and endorsed.

Resolved – That the submission to the APPG inquiry into transport infrastructure be noted and endorsed.

27. Transport for the South East - Strategic Investment Plan

A report was considered that recommended BLTB to formally approve Transport for the South East's (TfSE) final draft Strategic Investment Plan (SIP).

BLTB had approved a response to the consultation on the draft SIP in November 2022 and had agreed to receive a further report to consider formal approval of the final draft of the SIP. The main changes to the SIP following the consultation were set out in paragraph 14 of the report. BLTB was recommended to continue to support the SIP and formal endorsement was being sought prior to the submission to Government later in March 2023. If agreed, the LEP would write to TfSE to confirm support.

(Councillor Brunel-Walker joined the meeting)

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Individual local authorities could also endorse the SIP and some Berkshire authorities had taken reports through their decision making processes to agree their support.

Councillor Page declared for the record that he was Berkshire nominated representative on TfSE and he was deputy chair of the TfSE Board.

Several members commented on the SIP and all were supportive of the document, which was aligned to local authorities own local transport plans. One of the specific schemes raised during the discussion was the Third Thames Bridge and Councillors Page and Fishwick agreed to discuss this matter further outside of the meeting.

At the conclusion of the discussion, BLTB agreed to formally support the TfSE Strategic Investment Plan.

Resolved – That the final draft of Transport for the South East's Strategic Investment Plan be supported.

28. Future role and format of BLTB and BSTF

The LEP Chief Executive introduced a report that outlined the way in which the role and function of BLTB might evolve and set out the options that had been considered by the Place Making Board as to how BLTB might operate and be resourced from April 2023.

The background to the current position was summarised. For 2022/23 the six Berkshire authorities had agreed to provide additional funding for Berkshire LEP in order to continue its activity, including strategic transport and infrastructure support. This followed reductions in the core grant from government to LEPs that had previously supported this work and the shift toward central funding pots with bidding processes, rather than sub-regional allocation for Berkshire to administer. Berkshire LEP had worked with the Berkshire Place Making Board, comprised of local authorities Place Director equivalents, on the future options including support for pan-Berkshire strategic transport liaison.

The LEP had been advised on 24th February that the Place Directors had decided that delivery of transport support would be picked up by local authorities from April 2023. Slough Borough Council would continue to provide the secretariat for BLTB meetings and consider the options for BSTF meetings. The detailed arrangements were still being developed. After further discussion the Place Directors agreed that some funding of £25,000 be offered to the LEP to continue to provide some transport support, and whilst this was being considered it was recognised that, if accepted, it would only provide limited support. Members were asked to provide a steer on future arrangements.

Several members commented and the views expressed are summarised as follows:

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- The work of BLTB – the LEP, local authorities and private sector members – had been very successful since the current arrangements had been established in 2013.
- The government's change of approach towards transport funding and LEPs was recognised. The potential availability of future funding was uncertain. The were continuing priorities to have a united voice for Berkshire on transport issues, engage with TfSE and other transport stakeholders.
- The contribution of private sector members had been very valuable and BLTB supported the continued involvement of business representatives.

In conclusion, it was agreed that continuing pan-Berkshire collaboration through the BLTB/BSTF arrangements or similar, albeit at a reduced level, was agreed to be important. Discussions between the LEP and local authorities would continue as the new arrangements were put in place.

Resolved – That the options for future support to the BLTB and BSTF be noted and that the views expressed during the course of the discussion be considered in finalising the future arrangements.

29. Vote of Thanks

It was noted that whatever the future arrangements for BLTB/BSTF this would be the final meeting for Councillor Brunel-Walker who was retiring as a Bracknell Forest Council Member at the forthcoming elections. Councillor Brunel-Walker had been a member of BLTB for many years and in recognition of the significant contribution that he had made the Chair proposed a vote of thanks. This was agreed by BTLB.

Resolved – That a vote of thanks be recorded for Councillor Brunel-Walker for his contribution to BLTB.

30. Provisional Dates of future meetings

The next scheduled meeting would be held on 13th July 2023 and then on 9th November 2023.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.00 pm and closed at 5.03 pm)