

Statement to 19.7.17 Cabinet

At key points in the P&R East decision-making process, and as an economist and policy developer, I have expressed concerns about the way the decision was being made. So I am pleased to see that some of these have been addressed in your revised Transport Plan. In particular, I welcome

- It's awareness of the ever-changing policy-making context;
- It's emphasis on integrated rather than single project solutions;
- It's embrace of the opportunities WECA brings to progress high impact high investment schemes;
and
- It's emerging recognition that environmental and community, as well as economic development impacts, are critical to the evaluation of net benefits from infrastructure investment.

However, whilst I believe this P&R East decision to be the right one, I am less pleased with the enormous community stress, wasted public money and length of time associated with it, and am anxious that future infrastructure initiatives learn from its mistakes.

These are what I see as the three main P&R East lessons:

1. Stakeholder engagement needs to be earlier, better informed, more inclusive and open-minded:

In this regard I urge you to build, rather than assume, a shared purpose, and make sure initiatives such as city centre parking support it. And beware the dangers of, for example, "championing" the A39/A46 link road, without first understanding whether a wide range of stakeholders and expert opinion, all impacts considered, share your preference for it.

2. Ensure supporting evidence and analysis is transparent, impartial and "fit for purpose":

In these regards not only do I support those calling for independent, evidenced-based patronage data so as to understand the many reasons people travel, but also reiterate my concern around the circa £700k you have invested in P&R East related transport modeling, and question your claim that it is "transferable to other projects".

3. The final lesson is a subject in its own right, so I mention it here for completeness only:

Align the Council's risk management and capital approval processes with those of delivering successful infrastructure projects, and make these processes more comprehensive, and implement them rigourously.

So, I implore all members, regardless of political persuasion, to learn from past mistakes, in order to better confront the enormity and complexity of the transport challenges our locality faces. And to do so, armed with both a coherent, evidence-founded and future-focused strategy, and the combined resolve of the many and diverse stakeholders in its successful delivery.

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