

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

CABINET

These minutes are draft until confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting.

Wednesday, 26th January, 2022

Present:

Councillor Kevin Guy (Ch)	Leader of the Council, Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Councillor Tim Ball	Cabinet Member for Planning and Licensing
Councillor Alison Born	Cabinet Member for Adults and Council House Building
Councillor Manda Rigby	Cabinet Member for Transport
Councillor Dine Romero	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Communities and Culture
Councillor Richard Samuel	Deputy Council Leader (statutory) and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Resources
Councillor Sarah Warren	Deputy Council Leader and Cabinet Member for Climate and Sustainable Travel
Councillor David Wood	Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services

123 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Cllr Kevin Guy, welcomed everyone watching and participating at the virtual Cabinet meeting and made the following statement:

“Due to the ongoing Covid situation and a desire to retain a level of social distancing at Council meetings at this time, we are holding this ‘informal’ virtual Cabinet meeting to enable Cabinet, Councillors and members of the public to take part. This virtual meeting will be conducted in the normal manner but, as any decisions made will not be legally enforceable, they will be formally made at the physically reduced, quorate decision-making meeting tomorrow on 27 January 2022. We will review this approach for any future Cabinet meetings, in line with government and health guidance at that time.”

He confirmed that members of the public and Councillors would be able to ask questions and make statements on any issue relevant to the Council and/or the Bath and North East Somerset area at the next meeting on 10 February.

124 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Tom Davies.

125 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

126 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

127 STATEMENTS, DEPUTATIONS OR PETITIONS FROM PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS

The following people made statements at the meeting regarding the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement:

David Redgewell (South West Transport Board and Rail Future Severnside) *(a copy is attached to the minutes as Appendix 1 and is available on the Council's website).*

Cllr Vic Pritchard

Cllr Paul May *(a copy is attached to the minutes as Appendix 2 and is available on the Council's website).*

Cllr Joanna Wright *(a copy is attached to the minutes as Appendix 3 and is available on the Council's website).*

128 CITY REGION SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SETTLEMENT

The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Sustainable Communities regarding Bath and North East Somerset Council's approval to the final West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Strategic Outline Case to the Department for Transport on the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

Cllr Sarah Warren introduced the item and made the following statement:

"I am very pleased to be presenting this paper on the City Region Sustainable Transport settlement, that we hope will be approved by WECA, the West of England Combined Authority, on Friday, and that will begin to rectify many decades of underinvestment in this region's sustainable transport infrastructure as compared to other City Regions.

WECA has been awarded a historic settlement of £540m over 5 years, more per capita than other city regions, to progress an ambitious capital programme that will support a significant reduction in carbon emissions from transport, in line with the region's climate emergency declarations. The final allocation to schemes in the Bath and North East Somerset area is proposed to be £129 m over the 5 years, which is matched by a £17m local contribution.

The bid's key focus is on safe, segregated infrastructure for active travel (by which I mean cycling and walking), and continuous, segregated, priority lanes for buses, will reduce journey times and increase the attractiveness of alternatives over the car. They will also support our public health objectives, by increasing physical activity and bringing down air pollution, and they will reduce the congestion, which blights our

region and is forecast to increase without action of this sort, costing a huge and increasing amount in time and money.

The scheme will connect households with employment and education and deliver high quality inter-connected alternatives to the car. In Bath & North East Somerset, our approach will revolve around the creation of multi-modal transport interchanges and segregated, fast bus routes along the trunk corridors, served by safe walking and cycling routes in to interchanges from more rural communities. Where distances are too long for walking or cycling, such as in the Chew Valley, this plan provides for sustainable modes and we will look to try out more innovative schemes using the rural fund.

The important elements of the scheme for Bath & North East Somerset include:

- Improvements to the A4 corridor – as we discussed at last month’s cabinet meeting and incorporating a new sustainable transport hub at Hicks Gate (to replace Brislington Park & Ride).
- Improvements to Bath bus station
- Improvements to sustainable transport infrastructure along and to the A37 and A367 corridors, connecting the Somer Valley to Bristol and Bath.
- Improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure, and provision of secure, dry cycle parking, in and around Bath, Midsomer Norton and Keynsham.
- Additional funding to extend our liveable neighbourhoods programme, which aims to create residential areas that are healthier and nicer to spend time in on foot - beyond the 15 projects currently timetabled.
- A common West of England branding to bus services and real time travel information
- Simpler and integrated bus ticketing, to make it more straightforward to choose the right bus ticket, cheaper to make connecting journeys by bus, and making buses quicker to board.

I am very pleased to see that WECA recognise the importance of local ownership of, and buy-in, to the schemes, which will be vital for their success. Some of the larger schemes have already been out to early stages of consultation and will progress through further rounds of community engagement before implementation.

I am also pleased that all schemes will meet the high standards of quality set by Bus Back Better for bus infrastructure, and Local Transport Note 1/20 for cycle infrastructure, which will contribute to their acceptability to residents, and in turn to their success.

I support David Redgewell’s earlier comments that the reduction in central Government funding for the Bus Service Improvement Programme is highly regrettable, in the context of this capital investment in bus infrastructure, as is the lack of additional funds that are needed TODAY to support our existing bus services and call upon government to rectify these problems.

However, all in all, I am delighted to recommend to you this transformational programme which will improve our district in so many ways, as well as moving us along the path towards net zero. I would like to thank officers for turning around a

huge piece of work to prepare this bid, to a very tight timeframe, as central government often demands these days.”

Cllr Warren then moved the recommendations set out in the report.

Cllr Manda Rigby seconded the motion and then made the following statement:

“Firstly, can I thank Cllr Sarah Warren and her officer team for the hours of work they have put into this.

What I welcome more than anything from the CRSTS is that, via WECA, we now have access to the kinds of pots of money that can deliver real change in our transport offering. On our own, and with the ongoing defunding of local government, we could do little other than tinker round the edges. Each year that goes by, we spend approximately £6m on road maintenance when we know to keep steady state, we need to spend at least another £1m per year. As we have a statutory responsibility for road surfaces, but not pavements, the underinvestment in pavements throughout the authority is even more dramatic. Both cycling and walking, as well as car driving, and bus operation need suitable surfaces. For schemes throughout Bath and North East Somerset, we are now talking of £129m allocation, with us matching with a £17m contribution.

And in terms of projects, up till now, we struggled to have the internal resource to bid for the money on spec, with no promise of success. We couldn't scale up our delivery teams without clear sight of money and timelines for huge infrastructure projects. Now we know, if this paper passes this evening and goes through WECAS process as well, we have funding for the 2022-27 funding round. Specifically: Scholars Way, the brainchild of many before us, linking schools and the University along the South side can be progressed, we can create a cycle route between the city centre and Oldfield school, commission enhancements to the Bristol Bath railway path, currently a victim of its own success. At Fieldings Bridge, we can provide better pedestrian and cyclist access and either replacement of the existing or creation of adjacent new bridge, and a much-needed Silver Street Fosseyway walking route in Midsomer Norton will be programmed in.

The Department for Transport has confirmed that there will be other pots we can still bid for around Liveable Neighbourhoods and Active Travel, and if we are successful in delivering our CRSTS programmes... WHEN we are successful in delivering our programmes... there will be further funding from 2027 onwards.

All these schemes will be subject to the usual consultation and design periods, where we take on board all the input we receive to ensure what we deliver achieves the best result for our communities.

The scale of investment in transport improvement across the region is unprecedented. The opportunity to transform options for travel immense. The work to deliver these schemes will be huge, but the benefits will be felt by generations to come.

It gives me great pleasure to second this motion, and I urge all my colleagues to support it wholeheartedly.”

Cllr David Wood highlighted the opportunity for improvements to the A37 corridor to reduce congestion and to provide better public transport to and from the Chew Valley. He stated that connectivity is needed between villages. He would like to see a separate walking and cycling route along the old railway between Midsomer Norton and Bristol. He welcomed the proposal and stated that it must provide real change for the A37 and Chew Valley.

Cllr Samuel noted that very little government support or funding has been made available in recent years for transport in the North East Somerset area. This represents long overdue investment in the region and he thanked Cllr Sarah Warren and Sophie Broadfield, Director of Sustainable Communities, for the work they have undertaken. He drew attention to the unusual financial arrangements whereby the Council will have to provide a local contribution meaning that funding will already be earmarked.

Cllr Alison Born made the following statement:

“I really welcome this significant investment. Travel and transport are problematic across Bath and North East Somerset. It’s good to see that the funding is balanced across the authority and that the investment in both public transport and active travel should help reduce reliance on cars. Cars will always be needed for some journeys, but we must have more viable and affordable alternatives. The emphasis on travel to educational establishments is particularly important because this is a significant generator of local traffic and children who walk or cycle to school or who take the bus are more likely to continue those healthier patterns of travel in later life. This funding starts to address some of the long-standing issues we face but much more is required to achieve the transformation we need.”

Cllr Tim Ball stated that he agreed with the comments made by Cllr Paul May in his statement regarding the Whitchurch park and ride, as this would be detrimental to villages along the A37 and Whitchurch itself.

RESOLVED (unanimously) to recommend that the Cabinet on 27 January 2022:

- (1) Approves the elements of the West of England City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement that relate to activity in Bath and North East Somerset for inclusion in the submission to the Department for Transport.
- (2) Supports the recommendations made in the WECA Committee paper.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm

Chair _____

Date Confirmed and Signed _____

Prepared by Democratic Services