

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Sustainable Barnsley Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday, 1 June 2021
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Assembly Hall - Barnsley Civic

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Cain, Coates, K. Dyson, Fielding, Frost, Gollick, Green, Hayward, D. Higginbottom, Lodge, Lowe-Fleelo, Markham, McCarthy, Noble, Pickering, Richardson, Stowe, Tattersall, Wraith MBE and Wray

1 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies/Apologies for absence were received from xx in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

2 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor McCarthy declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 20 'Barnsley Transport Strategy' in view of her being the Cabinet Support Member for Place (Environment and Transportation).

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 27th April, 2021 were received.

4 Barnsley Transport Strategy

The Chair (Councillor Ennis OBE) welcomed everyone to this the first meeting of the Sustainable Barnsley Workstream of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and which was also the first held back in a public building with members meeting face to face.

Members were then invited to consider a joint report of the Executive Director Core Services and the Executive Director Place on the proposed Transport Strategy for Barnsley which sought a way forward for the borough to address transport related issues, focusing on key concerns and how the Council could make the most of potential funding opportunities.

The report indicated that the existing Transport Strategy (2014-2033) did not correlate with the information and objectives of the Sheffield City Region Transport Strategy or the Zero 40/45 agenda and the revised draft strategy, a copy of which was attached to the report, sought to address these issues as well as reflecting the Sheffield City Region Bus Review, the Active Travel agenda, the Rail Vision and the Local Plan. This was in line with government guidance and best practice in relation to reviewing and future proofing a transport strategy.

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Councillor Lamb – Cabinet Spokesperson for Place (Environment and Transportation)

Matt Gladstone – Executive Director Place

Kathy McArdle – Service Director Regeneration and Culture

Tracey Brewer – Head of Transport, Economic Regeneration and Culture

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following matters were highlighted:

- Matt Gladstone referred to the key drivers for making changes to the existing transport provision and to the barriers encountered. These had been articulated in the draft Transport Strategy and were set within the regional and national context including, but not exclusively:
 - The reduction in bus patronage which, following a bus review undertaken across the Sheffield City Region was making a case with Government for additional investment
 - The sustainability agenda – the development of electric vehicles, the push for active travel (in this context reference was made to the Trans Pennine Trail), and proposals to enhance active travel opportunities
 - The Rail Vision which had been undertaken and which highlighted issues within the Dearne and the proposed development of the Dearne Valley Parkway
 - Stabilising the transport infrastructure and arrangements on the back of the Covid pandemic with government subsidies going into the bus and light rail networks which was likely to be removed
 - The development of the road network to key employment sites and growth areas
 - The aim to encourage people to adopt a more sustainable means of transport going forward
- Members suggested that the decline in patronage was a long-standing issue but was exacerbated by an extremely poor service in many parts of the borough. Councillor Lamb commented that bus services in Barnsley and indeed across the region were woefully inadequate. There was a need for a significant investment in revenue in order to ensure that bus services were frequent, affordable, comfortable and ran when people needed them to run. This would then hopefully see a turn round in declining patronage, however, compared to places like London where £7 was spent on public transport per head of the population, only £1 was spent in Yorkshire. How issues like this could be addressed would be difficult and Barnsley could not do this alone and at the very least there would have to be a South Yorkshire initiative and possibly even regionally. He commented, however, that whilst the Government had announced a review of bus services, the finance likely to be allocated to any proposals was minimal and was unlikely, therefore, to solve the longer-term transport problems of the area
- Tracey Brewer commented that the review of bus services being undertaken by the Sheffield City Region was to look at ticketing and what a quality bus corridor looked like. A whole range of schemes and priorities was being examined in order to continue to receive funding and there may well be the development of enhanced partnerships and/or a franchise model. A key element would be to decide what quality actually looked like and, of course

pricing was also key. Arising out of this, there was a discussion of what members felt should comprise a quality bus service. Particular reference was made, amongst other things, to punctuality, regularity, reliability and affordability. In other words, a service that met the needs of all residents including children, families, the disabled and those with special needs. It was felt that the draft strategy might perhaps be enhanced to address such issues. The consultation to be undertaken should also enable people's needs and requirements for all transport options to be identified

- In relation to active travel, reference was made to the improvements being examined for both cyclists and walkers. Tracey Brewer stated that her Team was currently working with highway network colleagues, however, at the moment many roads did not lend themselves to being able to be used for a dedicated lane for cyclists. Additional off-road cycling options were being examined and the Transforming the Cities Fund and the Active Travel Fund was hopefully going to be used to develop both off road and on road cycling schemes. It was the intention to improve pedestrian crossings and, where space allowed, to develop shared use footway/cycleways and on road cycling where this was safe to do so, but also acknowledging the potential air quality issues particularly within Town Centres may not be conducive to cycling. During her time with the Authority (just over a year) the emphasis had been on off road cycling and encouraging more people to cycle. She also reported that the Worsbrough area was an area for one of the next pipeline schemes utilising finance from the Community Renewal Fund. Councillor Lamb stated that as far as he was concerned, wherever there were new road developments there needed to be very clear provision for cycling and walking and indeed all active travel options
- Kathy McArdle commented that one of the key issues that the Strategy was trying to address was the lack of connectivity between Principal Towns with the current 'hub and spoke' approach and the intra connectivity between the different districts, villages and towns of the borough. This was likely to be addressed by the adoption of multi modal travel. In addition, bus frequency needed to be addressed and there were plans to improve the bus infrastructure so that it was more comfortable to wait and for real time information to be provided of when busses could be expected
- Tracey Brewer commented on the potential use of rural/community busses particularly for low usage areas. Members were reminded of the current arrangement for tendered services via the SYPTE and the commercial nature of other services. With the introduction of an enhanced partnership arrangement the Council would have more influence on how and when busses were provided, and this was considered a key element of the strategy
- It was noted that studies were currently being undertaken into possible future developments and the results of these would be fed into the bus review which would then hopefully enable funding to be secured for those proposals. Tracey Brewer then commented on the current position with regard to the development of the Transport Strategy and the consultation that was being (and would be) undertaken
- A very 'high level' survey had been undertaken in relation to the active travel proposals (this had proved difficult in view of the inability to meet face to face), however, so far no further consultation had been undertaken as this was a draft document which, once finalised, would then be submitted for wider consultation. With regard to the economic sustainability of the proposed

changes, it was reported that bids for funding were being submitted to various bodies and organisations including the DfT although some finance had been obtained from the Transforming the Cities Fund for active travel proposals. The cost of tickets and affordability issues for passengers would be examined as part of the ongoing bus review

- It was noted that no specific contribution was made by bus companies to fund the roads infrastructure unless specific damage was caused
- Matt Gladstone briefly commented on the economic viability of the road network. He stated that the Government was currently contributing capital resources (electric busses for South Yorkshire etc.) rather than revenue and the primary focus at the moment was on active travel. Engagement was also progressing on a 'co-production' model with cycle forums. The Government was suggesting that for the provision of additional finance an enhanced partnership or franchise arrangement should be introduced. This would have implications for all parties and would require significant investment in bus networks. The challenge was, therefore, where would this funding would come from
- Information was provided about a study being undertaken by Mott McDonald into the primary network around the principal towns, local centres and on where attention should be focused if money could be made available. Efforts were being made to enhance the network and a £50m bid was being submitted to the Levelling Up Fund from the City Region. There were, however, some very difficult decisions to be made about where investment was to be made on the network
- Tracey Brewer commented on the very little influence the Council had over the provision of services and she noted the frustration that this caused, however the enhanced partnership or franchise approach suggested would give the opportunity to have a say into what services were provided. This would, however, probably come at a 'cost' and this was currently unknown. The bus review had been issued at the beginning of the year which in association with the Sheffield City Region would require the Council to sign up to and commit to an enhanced partnership. She briefly commented on the timescales and procedures that would be required to be undertaken for this to be implemented
- In response to specific questions, information was provided about the way in which funding via the Sheffield City Region was allocated. It was specifically noted that there was no funding formula for the provision of services to villages or towns. Funding was allocated per capita on a borough wide basis, the only difference being in relation to active travel funding. Councillor Lamb then referred to the pot of money available via the PTE for tendered services often in rural locations
- There was a discussion of the consultation process to be undertaken and of the need for members to assist in the consultation process and to engage as many people and diverse a population as possible in that dialogue
- Reference was made to the potential future funding arrangements and to the difficulties likely to be encountered. The Authority had connections with various organisations and Councillor Lamb was a member of the Scrutiny Committee for Transport for the North so had sight of the projects that were receiving funding and, for example, the funding for the Dearne Valley Parkway was coming via Transport for the North. For a small Team, compared to other authorities, the Transportation Team was very successful in obtaining external funding and it was pleasing to note that additional human resources were to

be added to that Team in the very near future. This was particularly important when projects were very much reliant on the submission of complex bids. The funding referred to was, of course, largely capital and this did not contribute to the running of bus services particularly at unsociable hours and this was a particularly challenging issue. Matt Gladstone commented that all funding for transport was now largely coming via the City Region and the Leaders of all the constituent authorities were united in their desire to see greater investment in busses and funding was being pursued via the Transport Levelling Up Fund but, as highlighted previously, this was capital funding and not revenue

- With the enhanced Partnership Model, the local authority would have to work closely with the bus operators to examine how additional investment could be obtained and there would be a role in improving the road infrastructure to assist smooth bus operations. For the authority to become involved in ticketing and pricing there would probably need to be a franchising model in place
- In response to specific questioning, reference was made to the Section 106 monies, to the way this was obtained, to the rules and regulations regarding its use and to the potential for using it to fund sustainable travel. Tracey Brewer commented on the work that was ongoing to try to ensure that, where possible, such funding could be utilised and she gave examples of the type of options that could be considered. In addition, the Supplementary Planning Document was being amended to reflect these changes in approach. Kathy McArdle then outlined the role of the Panel which determined where Section 106 money was to be used. In addition, the Place Directorate was examining all Section 106 agreements to see where the money was 'tied' and the see how the best use could be made of those resources in a more strategic way. Members would be kept updated and informed of this work
- Reference was made to Park and Ride Schemes and to the difficulties encountered in their implementation. The PTE were potentially looking at a scheme for Penistone as a possible option because of the rail enhancement work there. The difficulty for park and ride schemes was having sufficient traffic volumes to make them financially viable
- Reference was made to the role and work of the Barnsley Cycle Forum. It was noted that this was not intended to be a closed forum, but numbers had to be kept to manageable levels. It had been established so that the voices of cyclists could be heard and was chaired by the Chief Executive with Matt Gladstone in attendance. The Forum had come up with several suggestions and these had been taken up by the Highways Team for further examination
- With regard to shared surfaces/pathways, engineers were working within the MCA standards to ensure that schemes brought forward were compliant
- Councillor Lamb asked Members those members with concerns about specific services to contact him direct so that issues could be raised directly with the Stagecoach Operations Director
- Reference was made to the decision made by Transport for the North to abandon proposals for Smart Ticketing and to the rationale for this decision. It was noted that there had been no common agreement between operators. There had, however, been a remarkable shift towards contactless payments. Further infrastructure improvements were being make to payment systems and the four South Yorkshire Leaders had agreed for further incentives to be introduced for younger people, but difficulties were being encountered and discussions were progressing

- There was a discussion of the potential implications of franchising. Within South Yorkshire the enhanced Partnership option was being pursued in the first instance as the preferred option but there would also be an examination of what franchising might look like but there would have to be an examination of the potential impact this would have on South Yorkshire. If the enhanced Partnership arrangement was introduced there could be a further examination of Smart Ticketing on the basis that the authority would have more control and influence
- In response to suggestions, Tracey Brewer commented that she would be contacting the Young Mayor and the Youth Council to elicit their views about young peoples needs for transport for the future. Councillor Lamb commented on the statistical evidence that suggested that young people and those in their 20's were choosing not to purchase vehicles. There was a need, therefore, to involve these residents in any consultation going forward
- Arising out of the above Kathy McArdle briefly commented on the involvement of the Youth Council in the development of strategies, to education and training, on the involvement with schools to develop active travel plans as well as encouraging parents to adopt active travel lifestyles
- Reference was made to the importance of ensuring that the transport strategy dovetailed with strategies with cross boarder neighbouring authorities. Councillor Lamb gave a brief update on discussions that were progressing between the various leaders and Mayors particularly with regard to West Yorkshire
- The model of the Barnsley/Sheffield Enhanced Partnership was being worked on at the moment but it was understood that this would place matters more on a statutory footing rather than the current voluntary partnership arrangement. There would be enhanced support from the City Region if this arrangement was adopted and a decision on this was anticipated by mid-June. The government was agreeing to provide additional funding provided that there was a commitment to an enhanced partnership model. This was likely to give rise to a commitment to various standards and infrastructure improvements, car parking and matched investment in things such as electric vehicles. Work was still progressing to gain an understanding of the full implications of entering into such an agreement. It was not yet clear, however, what controls the authority would have over pricing of tickets etc. Zero emission vehicle bids being submitted and it was thought there would need to be a 40% contribution to matched funding but whether this would all come from the City Region was unclear. Stagecoach were, however, working with the authority to pull the bid together and they too would be required to give a commitment to financial contributions
- In response to specific questioning, Tracey Brewer commented on the work of her Team over the last 15 months and to the ways in which funding avenues had been explored specifically to fund infrastructure improvements for cyclists. She made particular reference to the conditions that were often attached to successful funding bids. There was, however, tremendous excitement at what was being proposed particularly in relation to the development of the strategy and the pipeline of schemes proposed. There was a long way to go to catch up with other authorities, but she was confident that this could be achieved given the vision and commitment now demonstrated
- Reference was made to the success of the Trans Pennine Trail and to the fact that Barnsley had some tremendous leisure cycling opportunities. What was

needed, however, was the development of radial routes to connect the villages to the Town Centres. This was something that Councillor Lamb was passionate about and was keen to see developed

- It was suggested that further consultation be held with 'normal' and 'would be' cyclists so that their concerns at potential barriers to cycling more could be broken down.

The Chair, in conclusion, commented that the future plans faced many challenges. Officers were aware of the challenges and because money was limited it was important to make future plans and projects as sustainable as possible.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Councillor Lamb (the Cabinet Spokesperson for Place (Environment and Transportation)), Matt Gladstone (Executive Director Place), Kathy McArdle (Service Director, Regeneration and Culture) and Tracey Brewer (Head of Transport, Economic Regeneration and Culture) be thanked for attending the meeting and for answering Members questions; and
- (ii) That when looking at the challenges being faced in developing the Strategy, the Executive Director Place be recommended to involve Elected Members, Community Groups, Ward Alliances, the Youth Council and the Young Mayor of Barnsley in the consultation process so that any suggestions brought forward be taken up and examined so that the Strategy and any schemes emanating from it have the full backing of as many people as possible as failure to do this may result in any new services provided not being used.

Chair