

Berkshire Local Transport Body – Meeting held on Thursday, 12th March, 2020.

Present:-

Councillor Page (in the chair)	Reading Borough Council
Councillor Anderson	Slough Borough Council
Councillor Brunel-Walker	Bracknell Forest Council
Councillor Clark	RBWM
Councillor Somner	West Berkshire Council
Stuart Atkinson (until 6.15pm)	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Charles Eales (Vice-Chair)	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Malcolm Kempton (until 6.15pm)	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP
Simon Ratcliffe	Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Jorgensen, Bob Mountain and Matthew Taylor

Peter Duggan (observer) had also submitted apologies.

PART 1

29. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

30. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th November 2019

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Berkshire Local Transport Body (BLTB) held on 14th November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

31. Briefing Note - TVB LEP/BLTB 'How We Work'

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

32. Thames Valley Berkshire Local Growth Deal 2015/16 to 2020/21

A report was received on the progress of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Growth Deal which set out the status of approved schemes, updated financial profile and identified risks.

Updates were provided by scheme promoters on each of the approved schemes:

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2.01 Newbury: Kings Road Link Road – update noted. The scheme had progressed slower than anticipated due to issues with the developer.

2.02 Bracknell: Warfield Link Road – completed. The One Year On Impact Assessment would be considered later in the agenda.

2.03 Newbury: London Road Industrial Estate – completed.

2.04.4: Wokingham: Arborfield Cross Relief Road – update noted.

2.05 Newbury: Sandleford Park – update noted. The scheme continued to experience some delays.

2.06 Reading: Green Park Railway Station – update noted. The additional funding had now been granted.

2.07 Bracknell: Coral Reef Roundabout – completed.

2.08 Slough: MRT Phase 1 – completed.

2.09.1 Sustainable Transport NCN 422 – update noted.

2.09.2 Sustainable Transport A4 Cycle Route with Bucks – completed.

2.10 Slough: A332 Improvements – completed.

2.11 and 2.12 Reading: South Reading MRT phases 1 and 2 – completed.

2.13 Wokingham: Thames Valley Park & Ride – update noted. Work on site was almost complete. A tender for the bus services would need to be completed which would delay services for a few months.

2.14 Reading: East Reading MRT Phase 1 and 2.25 Reading: East Reading MRT Phase 2 – withdrawn.

2.15 Bracknell: Martins Heron Roundabout – completed.

2.16 Maidenhead Station Access – update noted. Good progress was being made. Highway works were substantially completed and were due to be finished in the summer.

2.17 Slough: A355 Route – completed.

2.18 No scheme.

2.19 Bracknell: Town Centre Regeneration and Infrastructure Improvements – completed.

2.20 No scheme.

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2.21 Slough: Langley Station Access Improvements – update noted. The scheme had recently been completed.

2.22 Slough: Burnham Station Access Improvements – completed.

2.23 Reading: South Reading MRT Phases 3 and 4 – update noted. Works were due to commence shortly.

2.24 Newbury: Railway Station improvements – update noted.

2.25 – see 2.14.

2.26 Wokingham: Winnersh Relief Road (Phase 2) – update noted.

2.27 Maidenhead Town Centre: Missing Links – update noted.

2.28 Bracknell: A3095 Corridor Improvements – update noted. Work was due to start in July.

2.29 Wokingham: Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride – update noted. A report later on the agenda would consider a request for additional funding.

2.30 Thames Valley Berkshire Smart City Cluster – good progress was being made and the scheme was on track. An event would be held on 13 May at Reading Town Hall and details would be circulated.

2.31 Slough: Stoke Road Area Regeneration – update noted. Work had commenced.

2.32 Maidenhead: Housing Sites Enabling Works Phase 1 – update noted. The scope had been adjusted following changes to the Local Plan. Further work was taking place on an interim scheme and would be taken forward in the development of the Business Case.

2.33 GWR: Maidenhead to Marlow-Branch Line Upgrade – update noted. The design was due to be submitted to Network Rail by the end of the month with a decision expected within 21 days of submission. There was significant uncertainty about the outcome and the scheme would be closely monitored given the risk that the scheme could not be delivered within the timescale of the programme. The technical challenges of the scheme were explained by GWR. It was agreed an additional meeting may be required if the scheme could not progress and funds reallocated.

2.34 Slough MRT Phase 2 – update noted. Work was on site.

2.35 Reading West Station Upgrade – update noted. Concept designs of the station building were complete and pre-application planning work was underway. It was envisaged a planning decision would be in place in the summer, but securing consent of Network Rail remained a risk.

2.36 Wokingham: Coppid Beach Park and Ride – update noted. A report seeking financial approval would be considered later on the agenda.

2.37 Bracknell: A322 A329 Corridor Improvements – update noted. The scheme had been modified as the Wokingham element of scheme would not proceed. £1.6m of funding would therefore be returned to the LGF 'pot' for reallocation.

2.38 Theale Station Park and Ride Upgrade – update noted. Costs had risen and work was underway to adjust and potentially phase the scheme. The finance and deliverability risks were Amber/Red. The project would need to be monitored given the risk to the £4m of LGF that had been allocated.

2.39 Wokingham: Coppid Beech northbound – withdrawn.

2.40 Windsor: Town Centre Package – update noted.

2.41 South Wokingham Distributor Road Eastern Gateway – update noted.

2.43 Wokingham: Barkham Bridge – update noted.

Following the detailed review of the programme, Members expressed concern about the deliverability and financial risks with several schemes, particularly as schemes needed to substantially begin by March 2021 otherwise the funding may be lost to Berkshire if it could not be reallocated. These risks were acknowledged and the steps being taken to mitigate them were noted.

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

33. January 2020 Call for Bids scheme submissions and allocation of the remaining Local Growth and BRRP funds

A report was considered that presented a prioritised list of six bids received in response to the January 2020 Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Business Rates Retention Pilot (BRRP) call for bids. A total of £2,120,109 of LGF and £1,124,000 BRRP was recommended be allocated to the new and revised schemes. A pipeline of future schemes that could be brought forward quickly should additional LGF be made available was also recommended.

It was noted that the BLTBs previously agreed and well established prioritisation methodology had been used to score the bids. The following two schemes were new:

- Reading Buses: Completing the Connection (£1.5m from LGF)
- Slough Langley High Street Phases 1, 2 and 3 (£4.0m from LGF, conditional subject to funds becoming available)

The following four schemes had already received Programme Entry status and were seeking additional funding:

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- 2.29 Wokingham: Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride (£1.4m additional from LGF)
- 2.24 Newbury: Railway Station Improvements (£0.6m additional from LGF)
- 2.30 TVB Smart City Cluster (£0.3m additional from BRRP)
- Superfast Broadband (£0.05m from BRRP)

BLTB had a detailed discussion about each of the schemes seeking funding, particularly 2.24 Newbury: Railway Station Improvements and 2.29 Wokingham: Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride schemes requiring additional funding to meet identified shortfalls which put their deliverability at risk. Members expressed significant concerns including the lack of options for the allocation of the available funding given the limited time left to complete the programme; the robustness of the initial costings for schemes and the fact that the LTB were being asked to meet funding shortfalls. In relation to the concerns raised about the Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride it was stated that the scheme approved was the outline design and the costs had risen arising from issues identified during the detailed design and planning phase, including the adoption by Wokingham Borough Council of a new policy relating to the provision for electric vehicles. Members queried whether it was appropriate for the LTB to fund additional costs for such a reason. TVB LEP confirmed that the scheme had been submitted and assessed in accordance with the criteria agreed by BTLB prior to submitting the call for bids and that the revised Benefit Cost Ratio was still above 2 and represented high value for money. The process for further strengthening the business case process was outlined to provide assurance that lessons were being learned and future risks managed. In view of the comments from Members, TVB LEP would ensure the capital grant letters were sufficiently rigorous in relation to key milestones and other relevant matters. At the conclusion of the discussion, the additional funding for Winnersh Triangle Park and Ride was agreed.

The Newbury Railway Station Improvements scheme was discussed and the reasons for the additional costs were explained by GWR.

BLTB also reviewed the new schemes and a representative of Reading Buses provided more detail on the Completing the Connection scheme. Members asked about the involvement of other operators given the purpose of the scheme was to deliver customer access to live travel information and smart ticketing for local and inter-urban public transport across the Thames Valley Berkshire region. The potential State Aid issues were noted and TVB LEP indicated that the issues raised could be addressed through the development of the Business Case if the LTB awarded it programme entry status. This was agreed.

It was also noted that the LEP's Accountable Body had agreed that £45,000 LGF could be capitalised and retained for the purposes of carrying out independent assessments of one and five year post completion evaluations

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the prioritisation scores of the six bids received as set out in Table 1 of the report be approved.
- (b) That programme entry status be given to the schemes set out in Table 2 of the report.
- (c) That £2,120,109 of LGF be allocated to the schemes set out in Table 3 of the report.
- (d) That £1,124,000 of BRRP be allocated to the schemes set out in Table 4 of the report.
- (e) That the pipeline of prioritised projects for the allocation of any future Local Growth Funds as they become available as set out in Table 5 of the report be approved.

34. Financial Approval for 2.36 Wokingham: Coppid Beech Park & Ride

A report was considered that sought to give full financial approval to scheme 2.36 Wokingham: Coppid Beech Park and Ride. A sum of £2,400,000 was sought for the scheme which would provide a 250 space park and ride site, two park and ride bus stops, shelters and spaces for motorcycle and cycle parking to relieve congestion on key road corridors.

The scheme had been given programme entry status by BLTB in January 2019 following the re-prioritisation exercise to spend previously allocated funds from the Growth Deal 'pot'. The Benefit Cost Ratio of the scheme was 2.5 which was considered to be high. The independent assessor had concluded that sufficient evidence had been presented to support the case for investment in the scheme and full financial approval was therefore recommended.

The risks were noted as the scheme still had a number of stages to progress to ensure delivery by 31st October 2021 including planning approval and land transfers. A variety of comments on the scheme were made by Members including the value for money, Council funding and viability of the scheme. At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed to give the scheme full financial approval.

Resolved – That scheme 2.36 Wokingham: Coppid Beech Park and Ride be given full financial approval in the sum of £2,400,000 in 2020/21 on the terms of the funding agreement set out in paragraph 11 step 5 of the report.

(Malcolm Kempton and Stuart Atkinson left the meeting)

35. 2.02 Bracknell: Warfield Link Road - One Year Evaluation Report

A report was considered on the One Year On Evaluation Report for scheme 2.02 Bracknell: Warfield Link Road. The scheme had received £3.5m towards a total cost of £5.2m to construct a new link road to facilitate new housing development and relieve some traffic pressure from the A3095.

The independent assessor concluded that the One Year On impact report prepared by Bracknell Forest Council provided a well constructed and balanced document. It had not been possible to date to evidence that the road was carrying the volumes of traffic anticipated as this was directly linked to the levels of associated housing development which had not come forward as quickly as had been anticipated. There was evidence that the scheme had successfully redistributed trips away from congested parts of the local highways network.

Members asked a number of questions about the reasons why the housing completions for the various developments unlocked by the scheme. It was noted that the factors included a general slow down in the market due to Brexit. At the conclusion of the discussion the reports were noted.

Resolved – That the reports of the scheme promoter and the independent assessor be noted.

36. 2.08 Slough: Rapid Transit, Phase 1 - One Year Evaluation Report

A report was considered One Year On Evaluation Report for scheme 2.08 Slough: Rapid Transit Phase 1.

The scheme had been awarded £5.6m towards the total cost of £9.1m to introduce new and enhance public transport infrastructure in a key strategic corridor linking Maidenhead, Slough and Heathrow airport. Phase 1 of the scheme connected Slough Trading Estate to Langley, via Slough town centre.

It was noted that whilst the evaluation reports provided a good overview of the status of the project and initial impacts, it did not meet all of the requirements for a 1 year evaluation due to limitations in the availability of quantified metrics demonstrating the impact of the scheme. The scheme had facilitated a more effective approach to deliver bus services to major employers in the corridor with an estimated 50% increase in patronage since the scheme was introduced. The scheme was delivered on time and close to budget. In view of the fact that the independent assessors had not been able to verify whether the project had yet met its objectives TBV LEP had agreed that Slough Borough Council would undertake a series of further actions and provide more data to evaluate Phase 1 and take this learning forward into Phase 2.

At the conclusion of the discussion the reports were noted.

Resolved – That the One Year Evaluation Reports from the scheme promoter and independent assessor be noted.

37. Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS) Forward Planning

A report was received that updated on the progress and next steps on the implementation of the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy (BLIS).

The Berkshire Leaders Group had previously agreed to invest £750,000 of Business Rates Retention Pilot funding to develop outline business cases for projects to deliver the BLIS. The principles of the chosen projects would include one or more of cross-boundary reach, propose large scale investment, strong carbon reduction component and/or promote inclusive economic growth. The Berkshire Leader's Group had agreed a final list of nine priorities for outline business case investment which were set out in Appendix 1 to the report. Further detailed work would be undertaken to prepare the briefs for commissioning business cases.

Resolved – That the update on the Berkshire Local Industrial Strategy be noted.

38. BLTB Forward Plan

The BLTB Forward Plan which set out the matters to be considered at future meetings was considered and noted.

It was noted that an additional meeting may be convened in May 2020, if required, to take any necessary decisions on schemes and potential reallocation to ensure delivery of the programme by 2021.

The future dates for 2021 were confirmed as 11th March 2021, 15th July 2021 and 11th November 2021.

Resolved – That the BLTB Forward Plan be noted.

39. Date of Next Meeting - 15th July 2020

The date of the next scheduled meeting was confirmed as 15th July 2020.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 4.05 pm and closed at 6.34 pm)