

Meeting: West Midlands Rail Board of Directors

Subject: Minutes

Date: Friday 9 December 2016 at 09.30am

PRESENT:

Councillor Mark Winnington	- Staffordshire County Council (Chair)
Councillor Roger Lawrence	- City of Wolverhampton Council (Vice Chair)
Councillor Khurshid Ahmed	- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Peter Butlin	- Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Sean Coughlan	- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ken Pollock	- Worcestershire County Council
Councillor Ted Richards OBE	- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Stewart Stacey	- Birmingham City Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Babs Coombes	- West Midlands Rail / D for Transport
Matt Crowton	- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Beatrice Filkin	- Department for Transport
Malcolm Holmes	- West Midlands Rail
Clare Horton	- Staffordshire County Council
Toby Rackliff	- Transport for West Midlands
Mike Roberts	- Department for Transport
Peter Sargant	- West Midlands Rail
Laura Shoaf	- Transport for West Midlands

26. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Clancy (Birmingham City Council), Councillor David Welsh (Coventry City Council), Councillors Tony Johnson and Paul Rone (Herefordshire Council), Councillors Ian Morris and Andre Gonzalez de Savage (Northamptonshire County Council) and Councillors Angela McClements and Shaun Davies (Telford and Wrekin Council).

27. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made relative to items under consideration at the meeting.

28. Minutes of the Meeting of the West Midlands Rail Board of Directors – 9 September 2016

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2016.

29. Forward Plan

The Board of Directors noted a forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings. The following additional items were identified for consideration at the meeting scheduled for 10 March 2017:

- Single Network Vision;
- Rail Investment Strategy.

Malcolm Holmes invited the Board to indicate a preferred day for meetings to be held during 2017/18.

30. West Midlands Rail Programme Update Report

Malcolm Holmes presented a general update report to the Board which outlined progress against WMR objectives since the last meeting in September 2016. The report covered the following issues:

- Programme Development;
- Single Network Vision;
- Franchise Engagement Strategy;
- TfWM / WMR Relationship;
- Collaboration Agreement;
- Stations Alliance;
- Stoke on Trent / Cheshire East Councils;
- Stakeholder Conference;
- Rail Investment Strategy
- Staff Recruitment.

AGREED:

- (1) That the contents of the update report be noted;
- (2) That the creation of a new permanent full-time post of WMR Business Development Manager from April 2017 be approved.

31. West Midlands Franchise Update

Beatrice Filkin reported that two bids had been received by the closing date and that these were now being checked by the Department for Transport and West Midlands Rail. She explained that the process was in two separate stages with a quality and deliverability check and a process of consolidation of quality and deliverability and then price. Staff from WMR were assisting with the first stage of the process. A further check of risk adjustment and an assessment of what was likely to be delivered was also to be undertaken. She advised that the process was very time consuming and was likely to take until June 2017 to complete and would be subject to Treasury approval before any announcement could be made.

Councillor Stewart Stacey referred to the 'quality and deliverability' checks and commented that both Bidders had encountered issues with deliverability on their existing franchises. He queried how re-assured WMR could be in that regard. Beatrice Filkin explained that in designing the Invitation To Tender documentation had been given a high weighting element. Councillor Stacey

acknowledged this point but commented that a bid could score well but still not deliver. He asked what process was undertaken to assess deliverability. Beatrice Filkin advised that the DfT was aware of the expectations and aspirations of WMR and of the challenges faced by the prospective Franchisee. She accepted that it was not possible to give an absolute guarantee.

Councillor Peter Butlin commented that the rail industry had been subject to a large number of changes and enquired as to the current relationships between the Bidders and the respective Trades Unions. Beatrice Filkin explained that industrial relations was referred to in the Invitation To Tender documentation. Councillor Peter Butlin enquired as to the scope for flexibility with new technology. Beatrice Filkin reported that also covered in the Invitation To Tender documentation.

Councillor Ted Richards OBE reminded the Board that ultimately a decision on the award of the franchise had to be made even if all the expectations and aspirations were not deliverable. Beatrice Filkin reminded the Board that minimum standards had been specified and would be delivered. The ITT encouraged bidders to include further offers in their bids.

Malcolm Holmes reported that the RMT union were taking advanced action and a campaign against this and all other franchises. The Chair, Councillor Mark Winnington asked whether WMR was preparing a response to the campaign. Malcolm Holmes confirmed that a response was available if required.

Councillor Ken Pollock referred to "Driver Only Operation" system and asked whether this meant that the driver was the only member of staff on a train. Malcolm Holmes advised that this issue was not covered in the specification and was for the Bidders to determine. Beatrice Filkin reported that in the event of new trains being provided they must be capable of operating under the Driver Only Operation system. The Chair, Councillor Mark Winnington commented that a guard, if provided, would concentrate on customer service. Councillor Stewart Stacey was of the view that there was a balance between one and two person operation and deliverability. Beatrice Filkin advised that this issue would be considered as part of the quality and deliverability assessment.

AGREED:

- (1) That the report be received and noted;
- (2) That thanks of the Board be extended to the Officers involved in the evaluation of the bids.

32. WMR/DfT Collaboration Agreement

Malcolm Holmes presented a report which advised the Board of a change of approach to full devolution by the new Secretary of State for Transport and sought approval for the revised draft Collaboration Agreement. He advised that WMR was building a good relationship with the new Secretary of State and that the Chair and Vice-Chair were meeting with him on 14 December 2016.

AGREED:

- (1) That the report be received and noted;

- (2) That the revised Collaboration Agreement be approved in principle and be recommended for acceptance by WMR Partner Authorities.

33. WMR – Franchise Engagement Strategy

Peter Sargant presented a report and gave a PowerPoint presentation which outlined a draft Franchise Engagement Strategy for WMR. The report and the presentation set out the key issues relating to the various franchises that made up the network of services that operated in the WMR area and proposed an approach for engaging with them.

AGREED:

- (1) That the draft Franchise Engagement Strategy be noted;
- (2) That the Strategy be used as the basis for planning WMR's engagement with franchises noting that it will be kept under constant review to reflect on-going developments.

34. West Coast Partnership Franchise

Mike Roberts, Specification Lead for the West Coast Partnership Franchise, Department for Transport gave a PowerPoint presentation on the West Coast Partnership Franchise and responded to questions from members of the Board.

AGREED:

That the presentation be received and noted.

[The meeting ended at 11:05 a.m]

CHAIRMAN