

Meeting: West Midlands Rail Board of Directors

Subject: Minutes

Date: Friday 10 March 2017 at 09.30am

PRESENT:

Councillor Mark Winnington	- Staffordshire County Council (Chair)
Councillor Khurshid Ahmed	- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Peter Bilson	- City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Peter Butlin	- Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Roger Horton	- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Simon Jones	- Shropshire Council
Councillor Angela McClements	- Telford and Wrekin Council
Councillor Ken Pollock	- Worcestershire County Council
Councillor Ted Richards OBE	- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Paul Rone	- Herefordshire Council
Councillor Stewart Stacey	- Birmingham City Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Luke Bodin	- West Midlands Rail
Beatrice Filkin	- Department for Transport
Malcolm Holmes	- West Midlands Rail
Toby Rackliff	- Transport for West Midlands
Mike Roberts	- Department for Transport
Peter Sargant	- West Midlands Rail
Laura Shoaf	- Transport for West Midlands

35. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed those present at the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Clancy (Birmingham City Council), Councillors David Welsh and Jim O'Boyle (Coventry City Council), Councillor Tony Johnson (Herefordshire Council), Councillor Ian Morris and Andre Gonzalez de Savage (Northamptonshire County Council), Councillor Steve Eling (Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council) Councillor Lee Jeavons (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council), Councillor Roger Lawrence (City of Wolverhampton Council) and Councillor Shaun Davies (Telford and Wrekin Council).

36. Declarations of Interest

The Chair, Councillor Mark Winnington, reported that he had received numerous invitations from the Bidders to attend various events all of which he had declined. Malcolm Holmes advised that whilst the Directors did not have a direct role in the selection process it was prudent to decline such invitations in order to be seen to remain independent.

AGREED:

That on behalf of the Board of Directors, the Chair inform the Bidders that it was not appropriate for invitations to events to be extended to members at this time.

37. Minutes of the Meeting of the West Midlands Rail Board of Directors – 9 December 2016

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record subject to the addition of apologies for absence being recorded from Councillor Roger Horton (Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council) and Councillor Simon Jones (Shropshire Council).

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

38. Forward Plan

The Board of Directors noted a forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings.

39. 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 December 2016. The report covered the following issues:

- West Midlands Franchise Competition;
- WMR Executive Team Recruitment and Headcount;
- Rail Investment Strategy;
- Stations Alliance;
- Wolverhampton Station;
- Collaboration Agreement;
- Stakeholder Engagement and Media Coverage;
- Finance; and
- Risk Management.

With regard to WMR executive Team Recruitment and Headcount, The Chair referred to the sterling work undertaken by Peter Sargant and Babs Coombes in relation to the WMT franchise during their secondment to the Department for Transport.

With regard to the Single Network Vision and the HS2 Consultation exercise in relation to Phase 2b Councillor Stewart Stacey enquired how this was being addressed by the Government. He referred in particular to the issues around cross country services with trains from Newcastle terminating at Curzon Street which would have previously have travelled on to Bristol. Toby Rackliff advised that this matter had been identified in the response submitted by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) although, presumably, it had also been identified by both HS2 and the Department for Transport. He commented that the integration of longer journeys needed to be focussed upon and this had been included within the TfWM response. The Chair advised that these matters would be addressed over the coming years.

Malcolm Holmes advised that the Rail Investment Strategy was distinct from Midlands Connect. He reminded the Board that a key set of principles had been used at the Rail Summit held on 9 March 2017 to develop and inform the Strategy. He informed the Board that the Summit had been well attended with over 40 delegates present. He circulated an A3 sheet which indicated the headlines of the new Programme which would be developed over the forthcoming months with a view to the final draft iteration being submitted to the September meeting of the Board. The programme would then be finalised and published at the latter end of the year. He reported that resources to work on this matter would increase as new starters commenced their duties.

With regard to the Stations Alliance, Malcolm Holmes reported that Network Rail had engaged with the process and had appointed consultants to work on it on its behalf. The Secretary of State was particularly enthusiastic about this initiative. Consultants were to be appointed later that day to work on the 'Master Plans' for the trial routes.

With regard to Wolverhampton Station, Malcolm Holmes reported that a Workshop had been held with all interested parties in The Interchange was to be held shortly. An initial meeting with Virgin Rail staff held on 2 March 2017 had done a lot to allay the initial concerns of transferring staff.

With regard to the Collaboration Agreement, Malcolm Holmes reported that the sign off process with Partner Authorities was almost complete and that the Agreement would be signed imminently by the Secretary of State and the Chair of the Board.

With regard to Stakeholder Engagement, Malcolm Holmes reported that an Engagement Strategy was being developed and that he had met recently with the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce which supported the concept.

With regard to Finance, Malcolm Holmes reported that he anticipated that the position at year end would be that the budget would be underspent but that this could be carried forward into the 2017/18 financial year.

With regard to Risk Management, Malcolm Holmes reported that a fundamental review of risk was planned for April 2017.

Councillor Roger Horton referred to the Stations Alliance and drew to the attention of the Board that currently Galton Bridge Station operated on three different levels which presented a problem to passengers with a visual impairment not from an infrastructure perspective but from staffing levels to offer assistance. Malcolm Holmes undertook to raise this matter with the successful Bidder following the award of the Franchise.

AGREED:

- (1) That the Chair write on behalf of the Board to express its thanks to Peter Sargant and Babs Coombes for the work undertaken during their secondment to the Department of Transport on the West Midlands Rail Franchise;

- (2) That following the award of the Franchise Malcolm Holmes draw to the attention of the successful Bidder the difficulties encountered by passengers with a visual impairment due to Galton Bridge Station operating on three levels and staffing shortages and staffing levels.

40. Rail Industry Industrial Relations Update

Malcolm Holmes presented a report which informed the Board of the latest industrial relations developments affecting the UK rail network and which provided a commentary as to the potential implications for WMR.

The Board discussed the potential reputational damage to Partner Authorities in the event of any industrial action following the award of the Franchise.

AGREED:

- (1) That the statement prepared by the Combined Authority Communications Team in the event of any press enquiries be circulated to the Board for information;
- (2) That Malcolm Holmes liaise with Steve Swingler, WMCA Media Manager with regard to amending the Communications Plan to reflect the desire of the Board that the Franchise be operated in a customer focussed manner;
- (3) That Malcolm Holmes make contact with Rail North with a view to learning from its experience in this matter

41. WMR Business Plan 2016 – 2019 Review

Malcolm Holmes presented a report on the WMR Business Plan for 2016 – 2019 which outlined how the resources would be used in support of WMR objectives.

AGREED:

That the draft Business Plan 2016 -2019, revised in March 2017, as detailed at Appendix A to the report be approved.

42. Franchise Management Arrangements

The Board received a PowerPoint presentation from Beatrice Filkin and Malcolm Holmes on the Franchise Management Arrangements.

Councillor Stewart Stacey enquired as to the political input into any consideration of fare changes. Beatrice Filkin advised that this matter was covered under the Collaboration Agreement. Malcolm Holmes reported that fare regulation was an important principle of devolution and that a strategy regarding this matter would be included in the Single Network Vision.

The Chair queried the purpose and composition of the Strategic Board. Malcolm Holmes explained that the Strategic Board would be composed of senior officers from the DfT and WMR. He explained that WMR governance was a separate matter.

The Chair questioned which would be the appropriate body to respond in the event of any industrial action. Beatrice Filkin explained that this would be for the Department for Transport to respond to as party to the contract.

AGREED;

- (1) That the presentation be received and noted;
- (2) That a copy of the slides used in the presentation be circulated to the Board.

[The meeting ended at 11:10 a.m.]

CHAIRMAN