

South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee - Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee

(Via Microsoft Teams)

Members Present:

3 September 2024

Chairperson: Councillor R.Sparks

Vice Chairperson: Councillor T.Bowen

Councillors: R.Davies, S.Purseley, D.Howlett, M.John, M.Tierney, W.Lewis and D.Cundy

Officers In Attendance K.Tillman, D.Griffiths, S.Rees, D.Thomas, L.White, S.Davies, R.Lewis, S. Aldred-Jones, and T.Rees

1. **Chair's Announcements**

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The chair advised that there could potentially be issues with quorum. In order to ensure that business can be expedited the chair agreed to vary the order of the agenda.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meetings held on 16th July 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. **Regional Transport Plan Policy (Draft) & Consultation Update**

Members considered the Regional Transport Plan Policy (Draft) and consultation update as circulated within the agenda pack.

Officers outlined that the purpose of the report was to provide an update to members on the Regional Transport Plan (RTP), the different work streams that have been developed and the progress that has been made. The second purpose of the report is to seek support from the committee on the policy framework that has been drafted. Officers confirmed that the policy framework has taken into account the framework issued by Welsh Government and made it applicable to a local framework. The final purpose is the endorsement of the revised RTP development work programme.

Officers noted that the timescale is challenging but that significant progress is being made against this. Officers advised that a book of data has been produced which will assist in understanding the region and the likely impacts on the transport network. Officers confirmed that large amount of analysis has been undertaken that considers accessibility to key travel points within the region, mainly focusing on travel time. It also takes into account active travel.

Officers confirmed that there has been positive feedback on the case for change from Welsh Government and it has been subject to the recent consultation. There have been 814 responses to the consultation, the vast majority of these responses were from individuals. The two key emerging themes identified from the consultation were a concern about the potential of active travel measures that the plan may include. Also the recognition in the consultation that active travel space may not be suitable for everyone, particularly in the more rural areas. The second theme was the availability and cost of public transport, both bus and rail. In addition to this there was concern about the frequency of operation, the fares that are charged and the coverage of the network. Concerns also incorporated effective interchange between the bus and rail networks.

A key activity identified over the coming weeks will be engagement with technical stakeholders. A report will be brought forward outlining the activities undertaken, for consideration at a later date.

Officers are currently in the process of setting out the basis of the integrated wellbeing assessment. There will be engagement with the

relevant statutory bodies to agree with the scoping analysis of the assessment.

Members noted that the Independent Travel Active Board have published a about walking and cycling where described Wales as making 'painfully slowing progress' in getting people walking and cycling. Whilst it was acknowledged that the report has only just been published, members queried what consideration this report will be given to ensure that the best value is achieved in terms of walking and cycling?

Officers recognised that the active travel option will not be an option that will fit for all. It will be more pertinent in some areas than others. The policy framework has been drafted to reflect the priorities across a diverse region. Whilst it recognises walking and cycling, it also reflects the need to incorporate the other modes of transport. However, officers noted that they have not yet been able to consider the report in detail at this point. Officers confirmed that they are following the direction of national policy in terms of how they build up to the Regional Transport Plan and what they can subsequently bid into for capital schemes.

Members queried how the CJC sees its role in delivering active travel across the region. It was acknowledged that each individual authority has their own policies on this. Members queried if the CJC had given any thoughts with regards to what their focus will be on, for example will it be key cross-boundary routes or key arterial routes for economic development? Members considered the CJC a catalyst to assist with the delivery of the infrastructure. It is important when considering a transport network, that a person can complete an entire journey. Members were keen to understand how far into the local authorities remit on active travel, the CJC would be reaching into.

Members referred to the Independent Active Travel Board report and noted that it recommends that future government funding be used to focus on one or two towns within each local authority to ensure greater impact. However, members noted that it is rural areas which need supporting if the RTP is going to make a big impact and be successful, and that funding needs to be considered across the region.

Members referred to the amount of money that is being spent on active travel. It was concerning to some members that active travel appears to not take into consideration those who may not be able to

or have difficulty walking and cycling. Members considered that investment should be more widespread and take into account other modes of transport. Members queried if officers are linking with the bus services in relation to the RTP?

Members suggested that there needs to be a systematic approach which links between all modes of transport and spread across the region. Members expressed their concern and the requirement for further definition around some of the policies outlined.

Officers outlined that in order to gain a modal shift it would not just be a matter of capital investment. There is an element of providing the infrastructure, encouragement and awareness of promotion that needs to be done. In order to promote active travel it needs a modal shift, for people to be comfortable to change their patterns and do something that they may not be used too. Not only does this change require changes in infrastructure, but it also requires further funding for the building and the maintenance, to ensure things are maintained to a good standard.

Traditionally, active travel related to the shorter journeys and specifically surrounded cycling and walking. However, there is an element of normalising longer active journeys then there will be a significant benefit all around.

There is a clear message from Welsh Government, that there must be prioritisation of sustainable modes of transport. Officers of the CJC are trying to interpret the policies and provide recommendations that can be implemented through the RTP and the various individual local authority plans.

Members encouraged colleagues to read the Active Travel guidance as it sets out the aim of active travel is to make communities accessible.

Following scrutiny, members noted the verbal progress reports from officers on the RTP development workstreams; members endorsed the Regional Transport Plan policy framework; members endorsed the revised RTP development work programme.

5. **Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy - Strategic Equality Plan**

Members considered the joint equality, diversity and including strategy – Strategic Equality Plan, as circulated within the agenda pack.

Officers provided members with an update on the Strategic Equality Plan.

Members endorsed the Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (Appendix A) for approval, to enable the development of Regional Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) ahead of seeking approval from South West Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

6. **Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring 24/25**

Members considered the Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Report 24/25 as circulated within the agenda pack.

Officers went through the report. Members attention was drawn to appendix A. This report details the quarter 1 financial monitoring and projected year end position for 24/25. Officers iterated the projected surplus position and reserves position outlined within the report at the financial year end.

Members were advised that there would be a workshop held in the Autumn, where the future priorities for the CJC would be discussed. Members queried if there would be consideration of a reduction in the levy for the forthcoming year given the level of reserves. Officers advised that this could be considered at the workshop.

Members queried who was going to be part of the workshop. Officers anticipate that it will be made up of officers and members of the relevant groups. Officers advised that they would be happy to attend a future meeting of the scrutiny committee to gage the views of members and pass them to the workshop.

Following scrutiny, the report was noted.

7. **Forward Work Programme 2024-2025**

Members selected the following items to add to the Forward work Programme for the meeting scheduled for the 14th of October 2024.

- Draft RTP, IWBA and RTDP
- Welsh Language Standards – Compliance Update
- Budget Update Pre Audit Return
- Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring 2024/25
- South West Wales Regional Energy Policy and Scene Setting - Energy Funding Request

8. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

CHAIRPERSON