

Economy Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2022

Present:

Councillor H Priest – in the Chair

Councillors Bayunu, Farrell, Johns, Moore, Noor, Raikes, Stanton and Shilton Godwin

Also present:

Councillor Craig, Leader

Councillor White, Executive Member for Housing and Employment

Councillor Rawlins, Executive Member for Environment

ESC/22/01 Minutes

Decision

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2021 were approved as a correct record.

ESC/22/02 Updates on Sub Strategies of the City Centre Transport Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Director of City Centre Growth and Infrastructure and Director of Highways that provided an update on the progress of sub strategies and other activities within the City Centre Transport Strategy including an update on active travel plans and wider connectivity issues across the city.

Key points and themes in the report included:

- Updates on active travel schemes being developed and delivered;
- An overview of work planned for 2022 to develop strategy and investment plans to continue improving walking (which refers to wheelchair and all other pedestrian users) and cycling in Manchester; and
- Updates on other measures to improve connectivity including improving public transport and other mobility for the city.

Some of the key points that arose from the Committee's discussions were: -

- The need to ensure active travel schemes, such as cycle paths were developed in an integrated and holistic way and the need to reduce the number of severance points to ensure they were fully connected;
- The need to ensure public transport was affordable for residents of the city;
- How were the schools selected to participate in the School Streets scheme;
- The need to consider safety concerns was walking at night time;
- Consideration needed to be given to removing physical barriers, such as redundant phone boxes and A boards to ensure people can use the pathways safely and without obstruction;

- More needed to be done to increase cycle parking facilities and safe and appropriate cycle storage, noting the distinct difference between the two;
- Anti-social driving and inconsiderate pavement parking needed to be addressed;
- Noting that there was often a conflict between the bus system and active travel plans, especially in the Piccadilly Gardens area of the city centre;
- Supporting the work of the Highways Access Group;
- The need to improve communications with Members so that they are fully aware of developments and planned activity so that they could relay information to their residents and local interested groups;
- The need to deliver a cycle scheme that connects the north of the city to the city centre;
- Noting that mobility for residents is often an issue and calling for improvements to the footways; and
- The need to ensure any published information relating to schools was correct.

The Head of Environment Planning and Infrastructure stated that the issue of severance points was acknowledged and provided the context and approach adopted as to the delivery of early schemes. He informed the Members that an audit of the existing schemes was to be undertaken to identify the gaps with the intention was to use future funding to bridge these gaps. He further commented that an audit of the Bee Network would also be undertaken by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), adding that he would relay the comments from this meeting to colleagues at TfGM. The Strategic Director of Growth and Development suggested that a map could be provided to Members that highlighted the existing active travel schemes and the planned projects to connect these. The Committee welcomed this proposal.

In regard to the issue raised on the issue of the affordability of public transport, the Head of Environment Planning and Infrastructure stated that this was a consideration and identified as a priority within the Bus Service Improvement Plan that had been submitted to government and was currently being considered. He further acknowledged the comments raised regarding safety for the night time, especially in the city centre and added that this would inform consideration of schemes.

The Head of Environment Planning and Infrastructure stated that currently there was no dedicated funding available to deliver cycle storage schemes in private accommodation settings, such as apartment blocks, however consideration was being given as to how cycle parking could be provided in car parks that the Council controlled. He added that TfGM were also seeking to deliver improved cycle parking schemes at place such as train stations and these plans were currently being developed.

The Head of Environment Planning and Infrastructure acknowledged the comment raised regarding the conflict between the bus system and active travel plans, especially in the Piccadilly Gardens by commenting that as the number of journeys into the city centre by car reduced this would free up capacity on the road network for buses and thus relieve this pressure. He further provided an update on delivery of the project to

transform Deansgate into a high-quality, people-centred public space, prioritising walking, cycling and public transport.

The Director of Highways described how schools had been selected to participate in the School Streets scheme, noting that these had been very successful and Members would be informed of future funding opportunities and schools would be invited to apply.

The Director of Highways acknowledged the comment regarding anti social driving and the threat this posed to residents. He stated that the Highways Department did meet regularly with Greater Manchester Police to discuss issues and added that if Members had specific issues or concerns to contact him directly so these could be raised. He addresses the comment regarding the condition of the footways and stated that the intention would be to prioritise improvement works to footways. The Executive Member for Environment added that the Licensing Team did engage with businesses on the issue of street furniture and A boards and where necessary would target hot spots to address any specific concerns.

The Director of Highways noted the comment regarding the need to deliver a cycle lane to connect North Manchester to the city centre and added that delivery of such a scheme would be the next priority and Members would be informed as these plans were developed.

The Director of Highways acknowledged the comments raised regarding the need to improve communications with Members and stated that he and the Executive Members for Environment were discussing how this could be achieved. The Committee welcomed this commitment to improved communications with local Members. The issue raised regarding the accurate reporting of schools was also acknowledged and an assurance was given that that would be addressed with the Education Department.

The Strategic Lead City Centre Partnerships described the work of the Highways Network Group, adding that the group met monthly to consider proposed schemes and was an opportunity and forum for people with lived experience to discuss proposals with designers and Project Managers. The Executive Member for Environment stated that consideration would be given as to how the important work of this group was promoted.

Decision

The Committee:-

- (1) Recommends that an item is added to the Committee's Work Programme (to be considered at an appropriate time) that provides an update on the Walking and Cycling Strategy. This report would include updates in relation to cycle storage, cycle parking and the consideration given to ensure safety for people walking at night.

- (2) Recommends that an item is added to the Committee's Work Programme (to be considered at an appropriate time) that describes the findings and conclusion of TfGMs audit exercise of the Bee Network.
- (3) That the Strategic Director (Growth and Development) circulate a map to all Members of the Committee that highlights the existing active travel schemes and the planned projects that connect these.

ESC/22/03 Update on COVID-19 Activity

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Growth and Development, which provided a further update of the current situation in the city in relation to COVID-19 and an update on the work progressing in Manchester in relation to areas within the remit of the Committee.

Decision

The Committee notes the report.

ESC/22/04 Overview Report

The report of the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit which contained key decisions within the Committee's remit and responses to previous recommendations was submitted for comment. Members were also invited to agree the Committee's future work programme.

Decision

The Committee note the report and agree the work programme, noting the recommendations arising from consideration of the previous agenda items.