



Meeting: West Midlands Rail Executive Board of Directors

Venue: Hybrid – Room 109, 16 Summer Lane, Birmingham | Microsoft Teams

Subject: Minutes

Date: Tuesday 13 December 2022 at 10.00am

Present:

Andy Street (Chair)

Malcolm Holmes

Councill Peter Hughes

Mayor of the West Midlands

West Midlands Rail Executive

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

In Attendance via MS Teams:

Councillor Stephen Simkins

(Vice Chair – WMCA)

Councillor Peter Butlin

(Vice Chair – Shire/Unitary authorities)

City of Wolverhampton Council

Warwickshire County Council

Councillor Pervez Akhtar

David Balme

Emily Barker

Heather Bolton

Councillor Marc Bayliss

Matt Crowton

Councillor John Harrington

Councillor Ken Hawkins

Clare Horton

Ian McConnell

Tim Mitchell

Steve Montgomery

Victoria Mumford

Tom Painter

Councillor Simon Phipps

Councillor Phil Larratt

Councillor Philip White

Councillor David Williams

Councillor Adrian Andrew

Toby Rackliffe

Roshida Sangha

Peter Sargent

John Seddon

Anne Shaw

Councillor Mike Rouse

Coventry City Council

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Worcestershire County Council

Telford & Wrekin Council

Worcestershire County Council

Walsall Council

Herefordshire Council

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Staffordshire County Council

West Midlands Trains

Birmingham City Council

Avanti West Coast

Warwickshire County Council

West Midlands Rail Executive

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

West Northamptonshire Council

Staffordshire County Council

Staffordshire County Council

Walsall Council

West Midlands Rail Executive

West Midlands Rail Executive

West Midlands Rail Executive

Coventry City Council

Transport for West Midlands

Worcestershire County Council

Apologies:

Councillor Mike Bird	Walsall Council
Councillor Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Dean Carroll	Shropshire Council
Councillor Liz Clements	Birmingham City Council
Councillor David Hitchiner	Herefordshire Council
Councillor Daniel Jellyman	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Councillor Richard Marshall	Shropshire Council
Councillor Jim O'Boyle	Coventry City Council
Councillor Richard Overton	Telford & Wrekin Council
Councillor Izzi Seccombe	Warwickshire County Council

32/22 Welcome, Apologies & Introductions

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

33/22 Forward Plan

The forward plan of items to be reported to future meetings of the board was noted.

34/22 Minutes – 20 September 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

35/22 Board Leadership Group Progress Summary

The board considered a report to update on the progress made by the Board Leadership Group (BLG) during the previous quarter.

Resolved:

- (1) The report was noted.

36/22 West Midlands Trains

The board received a presentation from Ian McConnell to provide an update on West Midlands Railway.

The presentation noted key highlights from the previous quarter to update the board on the impact from industrial relations to the business as a result of the national rail dispute, operational performance, introduction of new Class 196 fleet that entered service on the Birmingham – Shrewsbury line in October and community engagement events.

The key focus areas for the next quarter of West Midlands Railway would be:

- i. Continued focus on operating performance during winter
- ii. Industrial Relations/Industry Reform
- iii. New trains introduction

Councillor Mike Rowse thanked Ian for the update and particularly noted the positive community engagement at Wythall Station, however noted a concern and queried the position of revenue protection measures on trains from Birmingham to Worcestershire due to impact on bus operators and increased anti-social behaviour issues to the Redditch area as a recent serious incident occurred in the area involving youths from Birmingham.

The Chair summarised from board discussions on anti-social behaviour issues on the rail network in the region for the need to a future agenda item to be presented from the Lead Director of Rail Customer Experience on the West Midlands Safer Travel Partnership and the recent resource of 8 additional Transport Safety Officer's patrolling the region's transport network to provide reassurance and clarity for the board on work in this area.

Councillor Simon Phipps noted that he had received e-mail communication from Councillor Liz Clements who had raised concerns in reduced levels of revenue protection on trains.

Action:

(1) Ian McConnell to circulate the presentation to board members.

(2) Forward Plan - Safer Travel Partnership

Resolved:

(1) That the presentation was noted.

37/22 Avanti West Coast

The board received a verbal update from Steve Montgomery on the operational performance of Avanti West Coast. Steve apologised for the level of service the public had received over the last number of months as acknowledged Avanti's West Coast service had not been acceptable and noted the business had worked hard to increase the number of train drivers where there were now just under 600 drivers trained compared to approximately 476 in order to effectively operate a service with an additional 12 drivers expected to commence in January 2023.

Steve noted that Avanti West Coast had addressed the historical issue of staff rostering for rest days that had caused a significant imbalance and strain on resources previously and had led to the business creating a new roster with no reliance on rest day working for both train drivers and managers that although was challenging during discussions with trade unions, resulted in agreement from 6 out of the 8 Avanti West Coast depots except for Euston and Wolverhampton. Furthermore, Avanti West Coast had ensured that the revised timetable restored 2 every hour services from Birmingham to London whilst maintaining 3 trains every hour for peak periods during the morning and evening but was not the final position and continued to be worked on. Steve also acknowledged the launch of the new Avanti West Coast timetable was not the greatest start and success due to a number of set failures experienced in infrastructure and drivers unable to attend work due to weather related issues particularly in the southern region of the country.

Steve summarised from his update that due to better resources and with a focus on operational performance and that given time, was hopeful that a more deliverable, consistent and reliable service to restore customer certainty and confidence.

In respect of the annual business plan for Avanti West Coast, the Chair reflected and noted if there was a role for the board to say to government of what was being asked by operators in the region that may not be in the interest of citizens in the West Midlands to avoid being imposed and involved in the debate for making WMRE's position clear for when the Department for Transport make their decisions. In response Malcolm Holmes suggested to the board that with the support of WMRE could draft a letter to be sent to the Department for Transport and separately a political letter from the Mayor to the rail minister and Secretary of State for Transport to set out concerns and expectations that received board agreement to undertake.

38/22 Rail Industrial Action

The Chair referred board members to the report within the agenda pack and requested for Steve Montgomery to provide the board with a verbal update on the latest industrial relations position as Chair of the Rail Delivery Group and whom leads up the negotiations for train operations with the trade unions on industry workforce reform.

Councillor Pervez Akhtar recommended for a union representative to be present at a future meeting for the board to receive clear understanding of the unions position as not represented at the board and to understand the Mayor's position in holding the government to account as communities were suffering. In response the Chair welcomed a union representative to be in attendance if the board agreed but reinforced the boards position in that it did not have the responsibility to empower the negotiations with unions and that the board's responsibility was to think and identify on what could be influenced and noted to the board the concerns raised in the position of Mayor relayed verbally and in a letter following a visit to Birmingham by the Secretary of State for Transport followed by a media interview in the importance for government to be involved in the negotiations as could be politically vulnerable and to support the hospitality sector which was also suffering.

Action: For a union representative to be invited at a future meeting to be included in industrial relations discussion

Resolved:

- (1) The contents of the report was noted.

39/22 WMRE/GBR Partnership Agreement

The board considered a report from Councillor Simon Phipps to update on recent discussions with the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) regarding an outline framework of principles for the future partnership with Great British Railways (GBR).

Resolved:

- (1) That the report was noted.
- (2) The update on the production of a Rail Customer Experience Policy (RCEP) for the West Midlands was noted.

40/22 West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy

The board considered a report from Peter Sargant on behalf of Councillor Peter Butlin to advise on the outcome of the consultation process for the West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy (WMRIS) and the process for finalising the document.

Resolved:

- (1) Welcome the high number of responses that were received to the consultation exercise for WMRE's Rail Investment Strategy was noted.
- (2) That the responses were overwhelmingly supportive of the proposed strategy and its objectives was noted.
- (3) That the Rail Investment Strategy is formally adopted by the board, subject to WMRE officers making a number of minor changes to the draft document in the light of the consultation responses that were received was agreed.
- (4) That the Chair and Accountable Director for Rail Infrastructure Investment can sign-off the final version of the WMRIS for publication, allowing it to be published in early 2023 alongside a report summarising the consultation responses was agreed.

41/22 Midlands Rail Hub: Outline Business Case

The board considered a report from Toby Rackliff on behalf of Councillor Peter Butlin to update on the formal submission of the Outline Business Case for the Midlands Rail Hub scheme from Network Rail to the Department for Transport.

Action: Toby Rackliff to share the presentation with board members.

Resolved:

- (1) The draft letter of support from WMRE to the Department for Transport in respect of Midlands Rail Hub Outline Business Case which was included as an appendix to the report was approved.

42/22 2021/22 Audited Annual Accounts for West Midlands Rail Limited

The board considered a report from Malcolm Holmes to seek board approval for the West Midlands Rail Limited accounts for 2021/22.

Resolved:

- (1) The West Midlands Rail Limited draft accounts for the 2021/22 financial year was approved.
- (2) For the Director of the company to sign the 2021/22 West Midlands Rail Limited accounts prior to filing at Companies House was authorised.

43/22 WMRE Business Update Report

The board considered a report from Malcolm Holmes to provide a general update of progress against WMRE objectives since the last WMRE Board meeting in September.

Malcolm referenced an e-mail previously circulated to board members to announce his intention to stand down from the role in March 2023. The process to fill the post of Executive Director was now being considered with Transport for West Midlands to which Malcolm has agreed to advise and support as required. Directors of the board would be kept advised of the proposed approach and progress in Malcolm's replacement.

Resolved:

- (1) The contents of the programme update report was noted.

[The meeting ended at 12:00pm]