

Meeting of the Cabinet – 20th March 2013

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Establishment of the Black Country Strategic Transport Board

Purpose of Report

1. To endorse the establishment of a Black Country Strategic Transport Board with Wolverhampton CC, Sandwell MBC and Walsall MBC together with other Authorities and Organisations.
2. To nominate the Lead Member for Transportation together with a Substitute Member to serve on the Board.
3. To agree that Wolverhampton CC act as the Accountable Body subject to clarification of the apportionment of costs.

Background

4. The Department for Transport (DfT) announced its intention to devolve funding for local major transport schemes to Local Transport Bodies from 2015.
5. At the meeting of the Association of Black Country Authorities held on 5th December 2012, it was recommended that Wolverhampton CC act as the Accountable Body for the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership Local Transport Body. These bodies will be voluntary partnerships between Local Authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnerships and other relevant delivery organisations.
6. The primary role of the body will be to prioritise and review Transport business cases for inclusion and delivery within the Black Country Major Scheme programme and, where necessary, make appropriate recommendations to a Black Country Joint Committee comprising the Leaders of the four Black Country Authorities.
7. Under the proposed arrangements the DfT would no longer have a role in the selection and approval of individual schemes, but it will require safeguards to be in place to ensure the appropriate use of public funds and value for money. The Local Transport Body, rather than the individual Local Authorities, will be the decision making body and specific requirements have been requested by the DfT by way of an Assurance Framework detailing the governance and working arrangements. The Assurance Framework for the Black Country was submitted to DfT by its deadline of 28th February 2013 as reported in the Capital Programme Monitoring Report to Cabinet at its meeting of 12th February 2013.

8. Wolverhampton CC, as the Accountable Body will be responsible for governance, financial management, audit, co-ordination of Freedom of Information requests and scrutiny. Discussions are currently ongoing regarding the apportionment of these costs between the four Black Country Authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Finance

9. The Local Transport Body will be responsible for the management and allocation of substantial funds following establishment. At this stage indicative allocations for the Black Country are £27.6m for period 2015/16 to 2018/19. Final allocations for the funding available from April 2015 will be covered as part of the Government's next spending review and confirmed as part of the Final Business Case for each Local Enterprise Partnership.
10. Costs incurred and their apportionment in relation to Wolverhampton CC acting as Accountable body are currently subject to discussions, the outcome of which will be reported to Members in due course.

Law

11. The Council is empowered to improve highways under Section 62 of the Highways Act 1980.
12. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions.
13. Joint Committees are established in accordance with Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Equality Impact

14. The contents of this report comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy whilst also seeking to introduce measures that will be of direct benefit to the whole of the community.

Recommendation

15. That:-
 - i) The establishment of the Black Country Strategic Transport Board to act as the Black Country Local Transport Body be approved;
 - ii) The Cabinet Member for Transportation be appointed as the Council's representative on the Board.

iii) A further elected member be nominated to act as substitute for the Cabinet Member of Transportation when needed.

iv) Wolverhampton CC act as the Accountable Body for the Board, including undertaking the role as Secretary, Auditor and Co-ordinator for Freedom of Information requests be agreed subject to further discussions in relation to the apportionment of all reasonable costs incurred in relation thereto.



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List of Background Papers

- Report to ABCA – 5th December 2012
- Local Framework for Funding Major Transport Schemes: Guidance for Local Authorities - Department for Transport