

## **NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **CABINET PANEL ON TRANSPORT**

#### **MEETING HELD IN THE REMOTE MEETING ON TUESDAY, 10TH JANUARY, 2023 AT 7.30 PM**

#### **MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors: Sam Collins (Co-Chair), Ruth Brown (Co-Chair), Michael Muir, Sean Nolan, Mandi Tandi and Alistair Willoughby*

**In Attendance:** *Louise Symes (Strategic Infrastructure and Projects Manager) and Penny Copestake (PA to the Service Director - Legal and Community)*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 13 members of the public, including registered speakers and Parish and Town Councillors.*

*District Councillors Jean Green, Ian Albert, Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg and Keith Hoskins were also in attendance.*

#### **8 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 36 seconds*

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Ian Mantle, David Levett, and Ian Moody.

#### **9 MINUTES - 18 OCTOBER 2022**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 02 seconds*

Councillor Sam Collins, as Chair proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on the 18 October 2022 were approved as a true record of proceedings.

#### **10 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 3 minutes 30 seconds*

(1) The Chair welcomed Members, officers and public organisations to the meeting of the Cabinet Panel on Transport. The Chair informed the Panel that each meeting will focus on a particular theme. This meeting we would be hearing from the Patrick Ladbury from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and from Councillor Ruth Brown (North Herts Council) giving an update on Hitchin Station Eastern Entrance.

(2) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council policy, this meeting would be audio recorded as well as filmed. The audio recordings would be available to view on Mod.Gov and the film recording via the North Herts Council YouTube Channel.

(3) Members were reminded to make declarations of interest before an item, the detailed reminder about this and speaking rights was set out under Chair's Announcements on the agenda.

#### **11 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 4 minutes 17 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

## **12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Audio recording – 4 minutes 25 seconds*

The Chair advised that there would be an opportunity for public to ask questions and make comments following the presentations from Patrick Ladbury and Councillor Ruth Brown.

## **13 GOVIA THAMESLINK RAILWAY (GTR) UPDATE**

Audio Recording – 4 minutes 47 seconds

Patrick Ladbury from Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) gave a visual presentation and highlighted the following points:

- The Franchise had been extended from April this year for a further three years, with a possibility of a three-year extension after that.
- He covered the service for the year looking punctuality and reliability.
- Issues / cancellations earlier in the year were due mainly to driver availability, trespass and suicide, and problems with the infrastructure due to the weather.
- Passenger numbers for 2022 were approximately 72% of pre-covid passenger numbers.
- Timetable changes, and how to do that to reflect the numbers travelling.
- East Coast mainline timetable – Knebworth services.
- East Coast Digital programme – bring better reliability / services.
- Royston Station – a new footbridge is being built with lifts.
- Access updates – waiting to hear about additional funding.
- Hitchin Eastern Entrance – looking for funding for a feasibility study.

The following Members, officers and members of the public asked questions and took part in a discussion:

- Councillor Roger Willcocks – Knebworth Parish Council
- Councillor Paul Ward – Knebworth Parish Council
- Councillor Sean Nolan – North Herts Council
- Councillor Ian Albert – North Herts Council
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg – North Herts Council
- Councillor Sam Collins – North Herts Council
- Councillor Mike Harrison – Royston Town Council
- Anna Howarth – Knebworth Rail Users Group
- Councillor Ruth Brown – North Herts Council

In response to questions Patrick Ladbury (GTR) advised:

- Finsbury Park had a rest break area for drivers, there was also interaction with other trains which can cause delays.
- GTR had 2.2 drivers for every job, which was the industry standard. They were recruiting more drivers due to the training taking place for the Digital Programme.
- Patrick said he had not heard of any new strike dates, but the unions would need to provide two to three weeks-notice for strikes.
- When Network Rail go on strike this includes the signallers, which has an impact on the trains.

- Regarding the East Coast mainline timetable for Knebworth, Patrick hoped to have an update after the 19 January.
- In the next control period (starting April 2024) we will find out which stations will get funding. The announcement of the funding will be made in during 2023.
- GTR would welcome a transport hub at Royston, Patrick Ladbury also mentioned it would be helpful to have just one ticket for buses and trains.
- Patrick Ladbury was aware of the issue with the Royston announcements and will speak to residents to monitor the loudness.
- A weekend services go back to affordability and passenger numbers.
- A Flexi season ticket was introduced during Covid and this goes across the whole system. It is more likely changes will be made to that, rather than carnet tickets being re-introduced.
- The initial East Coast signalling update would first go to Peterborough and then Cambridge later.
- The reason for the closure of the Railway car park in Letchworth was because electric car charging points were being installed.
- Peak services were being used a lot, so unlikely to see any reduction in service. During the middle of the day and at night when passenger numbers were low, questions are being asked about the timetable.
- Once funding has been confirmed for station accessibility, a meeting can be arranged with Councillors.

The Chair thanked Patrick Ladbury for his presentation.

#### **14 UPDATE ON HITCHIN STATION EASTERN ENTRANCE**

Audio Recording – 62 minutes 55 seconds

Councillor Ruth Brown presented an update on Hitchin Station's Eastern Entrance and highlighted the following key points:

- Work had been going on in the background.
- The Council did apply for money via the Government Levelling up fund but couldn't justify the operational costs.
- Councillor Brown thanked the officers who have been trying to prepare a bid.
- There was also an issue with the ownership of the land.
- Councillor Brown said that we were still keen to progress the project and were widening the scope to improve the East / West Access in Hitchin to make it safer for pedestrians and cyclists, so that we will be ready when further funding becomes available.
- Subject to resources and availability of funds Councillor Ruth Brown said she was committed to the project.

Councillor Sam Collins thank Councillor Ruth Brown for her update.

The following Members, officers and members of public participated in a discussion:

- Councillor Keith Hoskins
- Councillor Ian Albert
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg

Points raised in the debate included:

- It was agreed this is part of a wider issue, not only to give access to the station but to make pedestrians and cyclists safer.

- It was noted that during the last round of bids, GTR were not present, and it would be helpful to have their representation on the project. Patrick Ladbury confirmed they would be happy to be involved.
- There was a need to work in partnership with Herts County Council / Govia Thameslink Railway and Network Rail for this project.

## **15 GROUP DISCUSSION**

Audio Recording – 80 minutes 33 seconds

The Chair led a discussion and Cllr Brown requested any actions raised during the meeting to be added to the Action Tracker.

The following actions were raised during the meeting:

- Patrick Ladbury to contact Councillors Roger Willcocks and Mandi Tandi and arrange a meeting at Knebworth, with Councillors Ruth Brown and Sam Collins to be copied into this arrangement.
- Patrick Ladbury to put Councillor Mike Harrison in touch with someone from Network Rail regarding the idea of a transport hub in Royston.
- Patrick Ladbury to put in a request for Knebworth Fast Trains – copy in Councillors Collins and Brown with the request.
- Patrick Ladbury to speak to Royston residents regarding loudness of station announcements.
- Patrick Ladbury to forward a booklet that explains projects / timetables to Councillor Nolan.
- Patrick Ladbury to share any suicide details with Councillor Elizabeth Dennis-Harburg, also the Suicide Prevention Training that GTR staff receive.

## **16 ACTIONS ARISING, WORK PROGRAMME & FUTURE DISCUSSION TOPICS**

Audio Recording – 87 minutes 50 seconds

The Chair led a discussion between Members, Officers and public organisations to identify additional agenda items for future meetings.

It was suggested that Bus Transport, particularly in rural areas, to added to the suggestions from the previous minutes.

The meeting closed at 9.03 pm

Chair