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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Remote meeting of Strategic Transport Group held
on Wednesday, 25th November, 2020 at 10.00 am**

PRESENT: County Councillor J.Pratt (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Dovey, J.Becker, A. Easson, F. Taylor and
S. Woodhouse

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Roger Hoggins	Head of Service - Strategic Projects (Fixed Term)
Richard Cope	Passenger Transport Unit Manager
Christian Schmidt	Transport Planning and Policy Officer
Mark Hand	Head of Place-making, Housing, Highways and Flood
Deb Hill-Howells	Head of Commercial and Integrated Landlord Services
Gareth Emery	Passenger Transport Operations and Fleet Manager
Paul Sullivan	Monmouthshire Sport Development
Paul Keeble	Group Engineer (Highways and Flood Management)
Frances O'Brien	Chief Officer, Enterprise

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

D. Flint,	Severn Tunnel Action Group
T. Hand,	Magor Action Group on Rail
P. Inskip,	Severn Tunnel Action Group
P. Turner,	Magor Action Group on Rail
R. Corcoran,	Friends of the 65 Bus
B Mahony	Friends of the 65 Bus
R. Lemon	Transition Chepstow

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Remote meeting of Strategic Transport Group held on Wednesday, 25th November, 2020 at 10.00 am

W. Jackson	Forest of Dean District Council
A . Course	Transport for Wales Rail Services
L. Park	Transport for Wales Rail Services

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Transport for Wales Rail Service

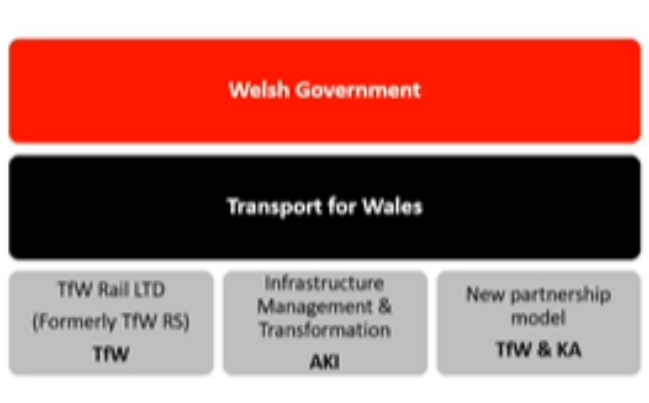
The Chair welcomed Alexia Course and Lois Park from Transport for Wales Rail Services to provide an update on the future of the Wales and Borders rail contract.

Due to COVID 19, passenger numbers have plummeted since March 2020 as low as 5% with consequent drop in revenue. Whilst a vaccine is expected , there is no immediate indication of when numbers will recover. The Group was updated that Keolis Amey Wales was unable in the circumstances to sustain their business without significant government intervention and an Emergency Measures Agreement was implemented in the short term. Safety remains the highest priority.

Transport for Wales is committed to delivering the vision for Wales and Borders Services launched two years ago:

- Core Valley lines transformation to deliver the South Wales Metro
- New trains and Rolling Stock

The future Operating model from 7th February 2021 in the medium term (5-7 years) was explained:



*Keolis Amey will continue with the contract to deliver infrastructure management and transformation on the Core Valley Lines.

A Group Member expressed concern about the rail services in Chepstow as the lack of provision drives potential passengers to use their cars. It was responded that the average service level based on customer demand and staff availability in the current Covid period is 80-85%. The Chepstow line is operating close to 100% of pre-Covid services level. Other operators have reduced services and stopping patterns, and representations have been made

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Remote meeting of Strategic Transport Group held on Wednesday, 25th November, 2020 at 10.00 am

to bring about the reintroduction of morning services. An official response from the DfT is awaited.

Post-Covid, there is an advertising campaign to entice and support customers safely back to the train. The request for additional services will be considered when the timetable is reviewed. From December 2022 there will be an hourly service from Chepstow to Cheltenham, plus additional Sunday services.

A Group Member asked about the withdrawal of the Cross Country Cardiff to Manchester (via Bristol) service and if TfW would consider taking up the service at 7.00am from Cardiff to Bristol using a derogation of the agency agreement limitation. It was responded that TfW and DfT are in initial discussions about this, subject to rolling stock and train crew availability.

A question was asked about the agency agreement and the hourly service, it was queried if a half hourly service could be considered that may require challenging the agency agreement barrier of only one train into Cheltenham per hour. It was agreed to look into this suggestion.

An update from Tracey Messner, Network Rail was received about Abergavenny Station Bridge as follows:

"I am aware it's a while since we've updated you on our progress with the Access for All scheme at Abergavenny station. Given the history of this project, I thought it would be a great chance to update you on what's been achieved so far and our next steps.

The Access for All Programme provides an obstacle free, accessible route to and between platforms. We manage and deliver the improvements which are funded by the Department for Transport who also select the stations. In Wales, this is match funded by Welsh Government through Transport for Wales.

We were so pleased that Abergavenny was selected by DfT for the programme. I know it's taken some time to get to this point but I'm pleased to tell you that the project is progressing well and we have now finalised our Options Selection report. This report allows us to identify the preferred solution to creating a step free accessible route between platforms at the station. At Abergavenny, this will be the addition of two lifts to the existing footbridge and, importantly, it will be in a way that will not conflict with the existing signalling arrangements.

We've now started the tender process for the next stage, which is 'Single Option Development'. Once we complete this stage we will have outline design drawings for the proposed scheme. We'll be working closely with Transport for Wales Rail Services during this stage, as well as the Conservation Officer to ensure we protect the station's heritage and obtain all the necessary consents for the scheme.

I hope to keep you updated as the scheme progresses, but in the meantime please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions."

The volunteer contributors to the meeting were sincerely thanked for their participation in meetings. Their knowledge and expertise is extremely valuable and greatly appreciated.

3. Bus Reform

It was explained that use of bus services has decreased dramatically during the Covid period and come for bus operators has dropped by up to 95%. A funding solution has been sought from Welsh Government that can also improve services for the future.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Remote meeting of Strategic Transport Group held on Wednesday, 25th November, 2020 at 10.00 am

A hardship fund was established for three months from 2nd April 2020. BES 1 (Bus Emergency Scheme) was introduced that imposed some conditions on bus operators in return for funding that lasted for a month to the end of July 2020. BES 1.5 provided ramp up funding until the end of October 2020 to support bus operators deliver school and other services, plus the capacity demands of social distancing.

BES 2 is a new agreement that ties operators into an agreement with Welsh Government and local/regional authorities for a maximum of two years from the end of July providing more coordination and direction. The desired networks will be considered during the next 4/5 months. Monmouthshire is the lead authority.

There are plans to set up a regional arm of the Cardiff Capital Region bus team to lead going forward.

Questions were invited as follows:

In response to a question, it was confirmed that there would be a review of bus services with public consultation to allow passengers to comment.

It was queried what this means for passengers, if there would be promotion and marketing of bus services to encourage passengers back and also clear messaging about essential purposes for bus travel. There will be some TfW workshops as part of the consultation with local, regional and national elements. A large marketing campaign for all Wales is planned with incentives to encourage passenger use. The importance of engaging about rural as well as urban services was highlighted and it was agreed that connectivity is also an important focus.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the Traws Hafren X/T7 has been very well used and a 5 year contract is out to tender with an opportunity to extend the service into other areas improving connectivity. It was also explained that a reconfiguration of roads to improve bus access to Spytty Park is included in Newport's Local Transport Fund and would fit in with Lord Burns' review. The importance of having an iterative process year on year for network planning was emphasised. Transport Focus has been used previously to hold Workshops to engage with residents and passengers, and this approach should be incorporated in the network review. Richard Cope offered to send information to the Group about network planning as the initial meetings begin.

4. Welsh Government: Pavement Parking / 20mph schemes

The Head of Placemaking, Housing, Highways and Flooding and the Group Engineer (Highways and Flooding) provided a verbal report.

- Pavement Parking: A survey has provided evidence that pavement parking creates danger to pedestrians, particular problems for wheelchair or mobility aide users, those with sight impairment and parents with pushchairs with a backdrop of Active Travel that encourages walking. Highway Code rule 244 was explained. Police have power to enforce and the local authority has civil enforcement powers for 7.5 ton+ and HGVs, or where a specific restriction is in place.

Welsh Government has taken steps that from July 2022, pavement parking will be a civil parking offence in Wales, with civil enforcement being the remit of local authorities incurring a Parking Contravention Notice. Local authorities can make Traffic Regulation Orders to designate areas where pavement parking is permitted. Work will be undertaken with County Councillors and Town/Community Councils to identify streets where pavement parking is necessary; proposals will be consulted upon.

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Remote meeting of Strategic Transport Group held on Wednesday, 25th November, 2020 at 10.00 am

Members commented that in many narrow streets there is limited parking and no space to allow parking on pavements, so Policing would be difficult. It was confirmed that the first step is to identify such streets and engage with the County and town/community councillors. It was agreed that engagement with members of the public, residents (e.g. to park on their drives/in garages) and businesses will be key. The scale of the task was acknowledged. Members were reminded that residents can be issued with permits to park in Council car parks.

A Member asked about areas where there are former council homes with no off street parking and questioned if the housing associations etc. could address this. It was speculated that there may be an increase in requests for front garden parking and housing associations could be asked to engage with tenants about this. This may be an option to investigate further.

- 20MPH: A Wales 20mph Task Force was set up in May 2019 with a final report published in July 2020. The proposals for 20mph are to save lives and encourage walking and cycling. Within current legislation, it is difficult to introduce 20mph limits. Welsh Government wishes to introduce a default 20mph limit on roads (mainly where there are street lights). It was explained how the authority and partners will implement the speed limit. The target date for introduction is April 2023.

It was noted that MCC has expressed an interest in participating in a pilot study.

A Member asked if it will be easier to introduce 20mph in rural settlements where there are often no pavements or street lighting. Using the current legislation, if speed is assessed around 30mph the police/authority would consider introducing physical measures to reduce speeds to acceptable levels. The new legislation will be 20mph default where it is now 30mph.

Members asked about the B4245 and asked about enforcement of speed limits. It was confirmed that Go Safe is the primary mechanism for enforcement, but education and encouragement to drive at lower speeds will be essential.

A Group Member recalled plans for traffic orders in town centres to be introduced by Summer 2020 that required a 20mph speed limit on roads off the B4245 and asked if these measures are in force. It was added that there has been no signage or communication with members of the public or publicity. It was commented that there has been no progress in making the road safer and it was noted that there are offers from the community to work with the Council. It was responded regarding the 20mph speed limits that the traffic orders were linked to the COVID response (Unlocking the Towns) and are relevant to all the towns. It was explained that this is a large piece of work to achieve especially in terms of legal processes. Capita has been engaged to assist with this work. It was confirmed that the traffic orders are not yet in force. Working with the community on the B4245 would be welcomed. It was queried if a separate meeting on the B4245 is needed.

A Member asked if "Your Speed" indicators would be effective on the B4245.

The cost of introducing a 20mph default was questioned.

Officers were thanked for their contributions.

5. New Wales Transport Study (Consultation)

MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Remote meeting of Strategic Transport Group held on Wednesday, 25th November, 2020 at 10.00 am

The Transport Planning and Policy Officer introduced this item. Members were sent the link to the consultation document.

Members' attention was drawn to the need to ensure the policies outlined are suitable for the future needs of the authority and secondly to comment on the projects, and their priority status. A Monmouthshire County Council response will be submitted and Group Members were invited to email Christian Schmidt with comments.

A Member informed the Group that MAGOR (Magor Action Group on Rail) had received a presentation from Transport for Wales and will submit a separate response.

A Member welcomed the integration of Active Travel and public transport, also engagement with passengers and communities at local, regional and national level.

6. Any Other Business

A representative of MAGOR thanked the Officers and Members for their support regarding the Magor Walkway Station over many years now that the outlook is looking very positive. The Chair acknowledged the outstanding contribution of MAGOR for their efforts.

There were no additional items of business.

7. Action List from last meeting

The Action List from the previous meeting was noted.

8. Forward Work Plan

Any suggestions for inclusion to be forwarded by mid-January 2021.

9. To confirm the notes of the previous meeting on 23rd September 2020

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true record.

10. To confirm the date of the next meeting as 10th February 2021

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm