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SOLENT TRANSPORT JOINT COMMITTEE

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Solent Transport Joint Committee held on Monday, 6 March 2023 at 10.00 am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Lynne Stagg (in the Chair)

Councillors Jordan
Keogh
Oppenheimer

1. Welcome and Introductions

Councillor Stagg welcomed those present and introduced the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Councillor Oppenheimer was representing Councillor Nick Adams-King.

3. Declarations of Interests

There were none.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 June 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2022 were approved as a correct record.

5. Business Plan 2023/24

Conrad Haigh, Solent Transport Manager, introduced the report and outlined the five priorities for the following year.

In response to questions, Mr Haigh explained that with regard to upgrading the underlying software for the Sub-Regional Transport Model (SRTM), Solent Transport had been updating the current model and could use it but the base data was now quite antiquated. It was also a question of structure and not just software which was why an upgrade would cost from £1m to £1.5m

With regard to timescale, Solent Transport had been actively working on ways of making the SRTM more sustainable in the long term and to reduce the funding gap. Costs had been reduced by 20% by re-procuring the operational contract. Solent Transport had enough funding to start the procurement

process but they needed to be in a position where they could finish it. There came a point where the data would not be robust enough to be amended so a full rebuild of the model would be needed. Within 12 months a specification with funding behind it would be needed and then procurement would take about six months.

With regard to charging a levy to help pay for the model, developers paid to use it. It might help if levies could be raised through the planning system, for example, through Section 106 agreements. This could be explored.

MaaS (Mobility as a Service) was going quite well in delivery but there was no roadmap in the UK as a whole for delivery. Solent Transport was leading in technical matters but this meant there was no-one to copy. There was a soft launch in October 2022 and with a wider launch, originally intended for before the pre-election period, but now likely to be in May or June. Solent Transport was developing integration with more bus services working with operators and hopefully there would be interoperability by the end of March. There were delays with back office processes and the consolidation of transactions which would probably be resolved before the pre-election period.

Trials for drones for medical logistics have been successful but Solent Transport was learning all the time as no-one else has done this in the UK. The second set of trials went "under the skin", for example, to look at vibration and safety. The trials needed to account for the types of medicines carried and the safety of the cases they were carried in. The robustness of the cases had to be tested by dropping them from a significant height to see if they could survive. The project was now on the third scale of trials to find the most appropriate drones, depending on the Civil Aviation Authority granting permission to use extended airspace. The right vehicles were needed for the challenging sea crossing. Medication needed to be attached to the cases without needing aviation experts at either end of the crossing, otherwise it would be very expensive.

Despite councils' financial state it was unlikely projects would not come to fruition. Running costs would be minimal and there was all-authority backing for projects.

As for subsuming Solent Go into integrated ticketing, it was already in the beta mode. From the point of view of user experience it was slightly clunky and also quite costly so Solent Transport was looking to improve it. Moving away from ITSO technology would be better for robustness, easier for customers and more efficient. The Gosport Ferry had recently dropped ITSO as it was too expensive. Whatever format a revised Solent Go took, it had to bridge the current gap with technology and be fit for purpose.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee AGREED the Draft Business Plan and ask the member authorities to take it through their local approval processes for agreement.

6. Solent Transport Financial Update

Mark Wallace, Accountant, introduced the report, noting that paragraphs 5.3 to 5.8 and Tables 3 and 4 were missing. (The revised report has been republished). Recharging officers' time had helped lead to £165,000 being transferred to the reserve and resulting in £103,000 more than budgeted for originally. Mr Wallace reassured those present that contributions would remain the same: £90,000 from Hampshire County Council; £40,000 each from Portsmouth City Council and Southampton City Council; £20,000 from the Isle of Wight Council. The budget had been stripped back to allow only essential expenditure. However, there was an increase in £11,000 in staff costs because of inflation and there would come a point when staff costs would exceed contributions. Partners were still contributing to the reserves each year (£51,000) so costs were still quite healthy. Mr Wallace would send round a supplementary note. As of November 2022, £9m of the £29m grant awarded by the DfT in 2020 had been spent. The reserve of £162,000 has commitments that needed to be retained. The reserve was healthy but did not have £1m to £1.5m in it for upgrading the SRTM. Partners needed to build it up and were working hard to achieve this but there were no easy answers. Next year's budget was being set with no increase for partners.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee:

1. NOTED the forecast outturn for the 2022/23 revenue budget;
2. NOTED the forecast balance in reserves for 2022/23;
3. APPROVED the proposed revenue budget for 2023/24; and
4. NOTED the position of the Future Transport Zone.

7. Future Transport Zone (FTZ) Report

Tim Forrester, Principal Transport Planner, introduced the report and gave updates on the programme.

- The FTZ was currently on the tenth round of recruitment and some senior roles had been appointed to that had been vacant for a while.
- The updated e-scooter factsheet would be updated to show favourable feedback from the Department for Transport (DfT), which showed how the Solent area has gone above and beyond expectations.
- The Beryl Bike Share scheme was launched in October 2022 and feedback was positive with about 400 vehicles in the network. It would be ramped up in the summer with more sites identified. Councils now had to decide which sites to progress.

In response to questions, Mr Haigh said it was uncertain whether there were more e-scooter users in Southampton or Bike Share users in Portsmouth. Micro mobility was a new initiative and there were different types of user and subtle variations between them. The Isle of Wight had the oldest e-scooter users in the country; in other areas they were usually younger. E-bikes were

really popular with about a 50% split between e-bikes and pedal bikes. However, it was still very early days.

Councillor Stagg said keeping bikes in Portsmouth was difficult as it had many terraced houses where there was little room to store them and they had to be taken through the house; however, there were bike hangars in the city. She thought docking stations were appropriate as otherwise there would be chaos with abandoned e-scooters and bikes.

Mr Haigh said the Solent Transport area had the fifth biggest e-scooter trial in the UK with 97% compliance for using vehicles properly. Docking stations were the right decision for built-up areas; other areas had designated bays. Clearer figures on e-bike usage compared with last year could be given in the summer when fleet numbers had grown but numbers of e-scooters were increasing. The aim was to make the scheme financially viable. A bigger fleet meant more uptake which in turn meant more availability and visibility. Marketing would increase when MaaS was more up and running. It was hoped to get ferries to join in and then a big marketing campaign would be launched.

The DfT were very pleased with Solent Transport and viewed it positively. Solent Transport was very active, for example, organising a two-day conference in January. The general consensus was that Solent Transport was delivering very well on its FTZ. There were weekly and daily challenges but Solent Transport was about one year to 18 months ahead of others who were developing a MaaS. Some FTZs were still at the financial procurement stage.

Tickets would be a key generator of income. They were currently available for the Solent region but could be rolled out further, potentially nationally. An update on the commercial opportunities available would be brought to the next meeting. Solent Transport was trying to build projects so that they would be sustainable once they were finished. MaaS could be quite expensive but other areas could use it as it was created to be replicated elsewhere. Mr Forrester would find out what proportion of users were Voi or Breeze. After upgrades in May there would be a big marketing campaign. When it was confident they were fully tested it was hoped numbers would escalate and integration would attract customers.

Mr Forrester gave an update on other programmes:

- The mobility credit scheme to help people on low incomes find employment was being trialled with Havant Borough Council.
- The DDRT (Digital Demand Responsive Travel) project was in the final stages of commissioning the back office system.
- Breeze for Business had been amended. Engagement work with organisations could include, for example, working with Southampton Football Club for match day travel.
- The revised Solent Go offer would be included in a more robust format.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee NOTED the report.

8. Future Transport Zone (FTZ) Extension

Tim Forrester, Future Transport Zone Programme Manager, introduced the report, explaining that the FTZ was due to end in June 2024 but had been extended to June 2025 by the DfT, though no additional funding would be given. The Senior Management Team had approved the revised profile. The crux was that it was felt an additional year would give enough time to deliver on monitoring and evaluation. Mr Forrester was confident the FTZ would be delivered by 2024 but the extra year gave the opportunity to make projects as sustainable and commercially viable as possible. Mr Haigh said it would enable Solent Transport to test and tweak based on feedback as projects were experiential to ensure they were fiscally sustainable and customer friendly.

In response to questions, Mr Forrester was confident the FTZ could meet its objectives. Solent Transport had had detailed conversations with the DfT. Plans had robust financial management and an element of considerable contingency built in and Solent Transport had worked hard to re-profile the programme and trim some fat. The DfT knew Solent Transport was delivering well so were unlikely to have a change of heart. There was more value in the additional year and it gave assurance that projects, which had many unplanned areas, would be completed. The DfT had already allocated funding so it would be difficult to claw it back and an additional year would prove the value of the investment given so hopefully it would be a win-win situation. As far as was known, only one extension had been requested or at least granted.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee:

1. APPROVED a one-year extension to the FTZ programme to 30 June 2025; and
2. ACCEPTED and APPROVED the proposed funding reprofile to accommodate the one-year programme extension.

9. Hampshire Bikeshare

Tim Forrester, Future Transport Zone Programme Manager, introduced the report which proposed the expansion of Beryl Bikes (Bike Share) into Gosport and Totton.

In response to questions, Mr Haigh said users could take bikes from Portsmouth to Gosport or to the Isle of Wight though that would be expensive for the user. With regard to extending the scheme to areas like Eastleigh or Chandlers Ford it was hoped Hampshire County Council, who did not currently have it, would see its value and adopt it. Gosport and Totton were good areas to trial the scheme as they were flat and had cycle lanes.

Solent Transport was looking at alternative models to docking stations which would need to be agreed with district councils. The bikes were all GPS tracked so Beryl knew where they were. There were no docking stations on

the Isle of Wight. There was opposition to bays at first but not now. Beryl were very pro-active in rounding up abandoned bikes; also the cost mounted up for the user if they were not returned.

RESOLVED that the joint committee APPROVED the capital and officer time funding allocations to Hampshire County Council to support the potential expansion of the bike share service to Totton and Gosport.

10. Any other business

Councillor Jordan thanked Councillor Stagg for her service on transport committees for since 2007. Her role as chair had helped Solent Transport move forward with its projects. She was warm and welcoming when new members joined. He thanked her for her commitment, enthusiasm, input and determination to drive projects forwards.

Councillor Stagg thanked all the members of the Joint Committee for their considerable work on exciting projects.

It was decided to elect a new chair after the local elections.

11. Date of next meeting

Thursday 14 September 2023 at 2 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

The meeting concluded at 11.15 am.

Councillor Lynne Stagg
Chair