

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 July 2022 at 7.00 pm

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- Present:** Councillors Alex Anderson (Chair), John Allen (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter (*substitute*), Kairen Raper, Graham Snell and Lee Watson (*arrived 7.02pm*)
- Apologies:** Councillor Tom Kelly
- In attendance:** Mat Kiely, Strategic Lead Transportation Services  
Kevin Munnelly, Strategic Lead Regeneration  
Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection  
Keith Rumsey, Interim Assistant Director, Regeneration and Place Delivery  
Navtej Tung, Strategic Transport Manager  
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded and livestreamed, with the recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **1. Minutes**

The minutes of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 1 February 2022 were approved as a true and correct record.

### **2. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

### **3. Declaration of Interests**

There were no interests declared.

### **4. Thurrock Supported Bus Services**

The Strategic Transport Manager introduced the report and outlined the three subsidised bus services currently operating within Thurrock, which were the 11, 265 and 374. He stated that the 11 service ran Monday through Friday between 7am and 7pm every two hours and covered areas such as Purfleet, Aveley, Grays, Chadwell St Mary, Horndon-on-the-Hill and Basildon Hospital. He added that the 265 operated Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the 374 operated Monday through Friday at 90-minute intervals and every three hours on a Saturday. He commented that some rural areas did not have any other public transport links such as Fobbing, Bulphan and Horndon-on-the-

Hill, and the contract had been operated by Nibs since 2019. He stated that Nibs currently had a three-year contract for the services with a two-year extension option. The Strategic Transport Manager added that the current contract had come to an end in March 2022, but had been extended for a year. He stated that bus services had been affected by the pandemic as in 2019 there had been approximately 89,000 journeys compared to only 30,758 journeys in 2020 and 65,008 journeys in 2021. He explained that the service cost approximately £454,318 per year to run, but this could change due to the number of bank holidays in a year.

The Strategic Transport Manager explained that approximately 60% of service users had concessionary passes and therefore did not pay for the bus service, although this percentage was higher in some areas such as Bulphan. He stated that 40% of bus users were paying for the service and this had increased since the start of the pandemic. He mentioned that Nibs had maintained the bus services in Thurrock, but costs were expected to rise by approximately £100,000 per year due to fuel costs, driver shortages, maintenance, and tyre costs. He stated that the purpose of the report was to seek approval and endorsement to review the services to ensure they continued to provide value for money and were needed by residents, either in their current guise or at all. He added that Thurrock Council did not have a statutory duty to provide bus routes and had managed to partly subsidise these services through a £50,000 Covid grant from the Department of Transport. He explained that Nibs also received some grants from Essex County Council as the bus services partly operated in Essex County Council's area. The Strategic Transport Manager summarised and stated that the report set out the process for consultation, which would be approximately 12 weeks and would run alongside a Community Equality Impact Assessment and user profiling. He stated that a report outlining consultation responses and other work undertaken would be brought back to the Committee in December 2022.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and questioned how removing public transport links would help the Council move towards its aims for sustainable and greener travel. The Strategic Transport Manager replied that the consultation would review how the service was provided, for example if big buses were needed for lower occupancy routes, or if smaller buses could be used. He added that if some routes were being under-utilised this added to Thurrock's carbon footprint, so it might prove more sustainable to remove some routes. He explained that the team would consider all consultation responses and how services were being used to ensure journeys were sustainable. The Chair sought reassurance that the team would be undertaking thorough research and investigation into how much services cost to run and how much they were being utilised to ensure accurate figures. The Strategic Transport Manager replied that although the transport team was small, it contained one officer who was an expert in the bus industry and had a good working relationship with Nibs. He explained that the officer had worked his entire life on buses, as a driver and operator, and provided the Council with invaluable guidance and expertise.

Councillor Allen queried if the proposal considered the Local Plan, which

would increase the number of homes in the borough, as this may increase the number of bus users. He also questioned how the consultation would be undertaken. The Strategic Transport Manager stated that the consultation would be undertaken through both digital and in-person channels. He explained that he would work with the community engagement team to ensure that surveys were distributed to those people in harder to reach communities or those who did not have access to the internet, for example those in rural areas. He added that the consultation would also piggyback off the 'Your Place, Your Voice' Local Plan consultation events to ensure the team could have conversations with residents and understand how the service was being used.

Councillor Watson thanked officers for their report and felt that the 2020 and 2021 journey figures were not a true representation of usage due to the pandemic, and asked if figures could be provided for 2022. She stated that the three bus services stopped regularly at Orsett Hospital and Basildon Hospital and users of these services could be elderly or disabled. She asked if the team would ensure that these people still had access to the hospitals if the bus services were ended. She stated that some people in rural villages only had access to these public transport services and asked officers to wait until the Local Plan was finalised before considering stopping services. The Strategic Transport Manager responded that the team were using the 2019 journey figures as a baseline, as this was the last year that data was not affected by the pandemic. He stated that it was important for the team to consider how buses were used and why to ensure they could understand the reasons for use. The Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Public Protection added that the Local Plan would include the Transport Strategy, which would outline how to improve sustainable travel within Thurrock. He explained that the both the Local Plan consultation and bus service consultation would happen at the same time, so would piggyback off each other and ensure bus services were considered as part of the wider Local Plan picture. He stated that the team would work to ensure that the consultation captured any unintended consequences if the bus route was stopped.

Councillor Carter queried if Thurrock Council had any control over the number of concessionary pass holders. He felt that £5.10 per journey was expensive per passenger and felt it was good to consult users and begin the conversation to ensure taxpayer value for money. The Strategic Transport Manager explained that the concessionary pass scheme was central government led, and Thurrock had little control over who received a pass. He added that Thurrock did allow concessionary pass holders free travel at 9am, compared to government guidelines which suggested free travel should start at 9.30am, and Thurrock also allowed carers free travel which was not outlined by central government. He stated that central government provided Councils with a grant for the concessionary pass, which was then recompensed to bus operators using a complex formula. Councillor Allen felt concerned for elderly and disabled residents if the bus services were stopped and sought clarification on how much the service cost could increase. He asked if the Council could investigate alternative provision for elderly and

vulnerable residents. The Strategic Transport Manager stated that the service cost could increase by approximately £100,000 per year, which would mean the service would cost approximately £500,000 per year. He added that although the Council did not have a statutory duty to provide these bus services, under the Transport Act 1985, Council's did have to show consideration for services. He added that the team would be looking into alternative transport methods, other service providers, and new ways of operating services.

Councillor Snell highlighted that the 89,000 journeys were spread across the three routes and did not indicate the number of passengers using each service. He added that the £5.10 cost per journey was not spread evenly across all passengers, as 60% of passengers were concessionary pass holders, so only 40% of users paid for the service. He asked if the team could investigate how many people used the bus services, rather than how many trips they were making. He also asked if the bus operator had tried to provide cost savings already, and if alternatives had been considered. The Strategic Transport Manager stated that the team would be looking into more detailed figures after the consultation, and this could be shared with the Committee at that point. He explained that the bus operator had small profit margins and it was therefore difficult to find cost savings, particularly with increased future costs and lack of bus price increases for the past three years. Councillor Raper highlighted section 3.3 of the report and asked if the team had the manpower to conduct a thorough in-person consultation across Thurrock, as some residents struggled to access online consultations. The Strategic Transport Manager replied that they would work with the communities' team to look at how the consultation could be promoted, for example posters, drop-off centres and through bus drivers themselves. He stated that the team would work with bus operators to promote the consultation and would organise postal consultations too.

The Chair thanked officers for their report and asked if the report scheduled for December could contain figures regarding the cost per passenger, rather than cost per journey, and the number of passengers on each service.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the Committee agreed to endorse the commencement of consultation within the community for a period of no less than 12 weeks on the need and impact of the three bus services supported by Thurrock Council.**
- 2. That the Committee noted that during the consultation period any necessary profiling of user groups is to be undertaken together with a Community Equalities Impact Assessment.**
- 3. That a further report scheduled for December 2022 will be presented to the Committee to be made aware of the outcome of the consultation, the Community Equalities Impact Assessment and recommended options for future service provision into 2023 and beyond.**

## 5. Stanford-le-Hope Interchange Report

The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery introduced the report and stated that the project was being brought forward in two phases: Phase 1 being the new station, which was in detailed design phase and construction stage; and the Phase 2 being the Transport Hub, which was in concept design stage. He stated that a contractor for Phase 1 had been appointed in March 2022 and the team were currently negotiating the final sign-off of the contract, which would hopefully be completed next week. He added that there was currently a one- or two-month delay to works starting on the site due to the contract execution issues, but was hopeful that the contractors could offset this delay as the detailed design phase continued. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery added that the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), who are one of the funders, had asked for an updated business case demonstrating value for money, which had been issued in draft with the aim that it be endorsed by SELEP in September. He stated that Part 2 of the business case concerning Phase 2 would describe how the concept design would be reviewed in partnership with stakeholders to ensure local businesses, such as the port, had their transport needs met and property development opportunities explored. He stated that construction of Phase 2 of the project could not begin until Phase 1 was completed, so felt that now was the optimal time to undertake a re-evaluation.

The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery explained that the contractors price met the Phase 1 budget envelope, and the team were working on a fixed cost contract, although this was currently being discussed with contractors due to the delayed execution and ongoing inflation issues. He highlighted Table 3.10 of the report which outlined the key milestones in the scheme, and explained that once the contract had been signed, activity such as enabling works could begin onsite. He added that 3.11 of the report outlined the key risks, mitigation, and opportunities for the scheme, and highlighted that Network Rail were involved in the scheme in an Asset Protection capacity and were an integral part of the design team, which meant that ideas such as reduced piling for platforms through value engineering could be progressed.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and asked if the late contract signing would influence the construction start date. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery stated that the effect of the late contract signing would be understood when the contract had been signed and the contractors programme was submitted. Councillor Allen felt that the project had taken a long time, but felt pleased that it seemed to be moving forward. He asked if the project could still be delivered within the original budget envelope, as the detailed design had been changed. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery felt confident that Phase 1 of the project could be delivered within the current budget envelope as there was risk tolerance allowed for. He stated that the team would be looking at additional funding for Phase 2 of the project to reflect opportunity to deliver

greater benefits.

Councillor Watson asked how much the contract would be signed for. She queried if the updated business case would increase the budget envelope and asked for the level of risk tolerance. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery stated that as contract negotiations were ongoing, he should not release the contract value information into the public realm. He added that as the cost for the project had increased, SELEP had asked additional questions regarding value for money, which the team were providing. He commented that the current budget was approximately £29million, and an adequate risk tolerance was included in this for Phase 1 construction. Councillor Watson asked if a report on the Stanford-le-Hope Interchange project be brought to every Committee meeting. Councillor Raper highlighted section 3.4 of the report and asked how feedback on the project had been collected. The Interim Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery replied that a steering group had been set up for the project which included resident representatives and stakeholders such as, SELEP, the Port of London and Network Rail, who regularly provided project feedback.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**1. That the Committee noted and commented on the information provided relating to the Stanford-le-Hope Interchange project.**

#### **6. Tilbury Town Fund Programme**

The Strategic Lead Regeneration introduced the report and stated that it was being presented to the Committee ahead of submission to Cabinet next week, and it outlined the Tilbury Town Fund programme. He stated that the programme provided approximately £22.8million to Tilbury as part of central government's levelling up programme, and officers were currently in the process of preparing a Business Case Summary to be submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities before 5 August deadline. He explained that Table 1 of the report outlined the revised programme list, which had been amended following a cost plan review and stakeholder feedback.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and felt that it was positive as it would provide approximately £22.8million in funding to Tilbury. He asked if the team had considered cost inflation for areas such as materials within the budget, as parts of the project was not due to be completed until March 2026, during which inflation may have risen further. The Strategic Lead Regeneration stated that during the programme review stage, the budget would be looked at more rigorously. He explained that there had been inconsistencies in the previous budget due to inflation, which were now being addressed as outlined in section 3.4 of the report. The Chair queried the cost increase for the Tilbury jetty. The Strategic Lead Regeneration explained that this cost increase was due to sense checking the preliminary design. He stated that the first design had been for a double-decker jetty structure, which was not required and had been over-engineered. He stated that the cost

increase reflected predicted cost increases for quarter 3 in 2023 and other contingencies. He added that other areas of the fund had reduced their budget envelopes, for example the community hub and adult skills centre which had reduced costs by proposing the reuse of existing buildings rather than building a new building.

Councillor Allen felt that the proposed jetty would be more beneficial to the cruise terminal and ports rather than residents, although he felt it could be a good way to travel into London. He asked who had examined the preferred site of the youth centre at Anchor Fields and why they had determined that site to be the best location. He felt that other areas such as Brennan Road and London Road would be better sites for the youth centre, as Anchor Fields was currently designated as a Field in Trust and used as open, green space by residents. He asked if other sites could be explored and investigated for the youth centre. The Strategic Lead Regeneration explained that the Committee and Cabinet had previously considered the Town Investment Plan, which had included the proposal for the Thurrock Youth Zone. He explained that the location was subject to review, but the preferred site was Anchor Fields due to constraints with other sites. He explained that the old youth centre building was too small; the police station was also too small and not council owned; the children's centre was still being used as a children's centre with no plans to move; Dock Road was situated on industrial land, on the edge of the heart area, and had significant remediation costs; and Daisy Fields was used for a more active recreational area with sports pitches. He stated that the team had considered all sites against the agreed upon criteria, for example the site had to be within the heart of the community and council owned, and the proposed site would undergo due diligence tests before coming back to the Committee and Cabinet. The Strategic Lead Regeneration added that the site would have to undergo consultation and go through the planning process, which would include reasons why other sites were not as viable. He summarised and stated that the team would engage with residents through a public consultation with Onside to balance the benefits of the site against resident concerns. The Chair asked how much land would be left at Anchor Fields if the proposed youth centre was built there. The Strategic Lead Regeneration stated that minimal land take would be a requirement of the build and the team would ensure the building had a small footprint through consultation and engagement.

Councillor Watson questioned how the proposals would benefit the people of Tilbury. She felt that residents would benefit more from the regeneration of areas such as Dock Road, rather than a new jetty or heritage regeneration. She asked if Uber would be willing to contribute to the cost of the jetty, as she felt they would be the primary beneficiaries. She questioned why the cost of the Fort works had increased, but the cost of the adult skills hub had decreased, and who made the decisions regarding the proposals. The Strategic Lead Regeneration explained that the proposals were agreed upon by the Tilbury Town Fund Board (TTFB), which was constituted in line with central government guidance and included residents, commercial stakeholders, and political members. He stated that the TTFB had felt that the proposed programme balanced resources to ensure the money was spent in

the right places. He added that the team had talked to the relevant services about how buildings could be adapted and made fit for purpose, and would meet the need of residents, for example the proposed youth centre and adult skills hub. He commented that youth centres had a proven impact on the outcomes for young people, and programmes such as the jetty would improve commuters' journeys and encourage visitors to Tilbury to visit Tilbury Fort and the proposed Heritage Centre. He summarised and stated that points raised by the Committee would be reported back to Cabinet.

Councillor Raper asked how the fund would improve the area of Tilbury. The Strategic Lead Regeneration described how the TTFB had looked at the collection of buildings in Tilbury, such as the parade and church, and felt that improvements through the public realm team could uplift the area. He gave the example of the 1920s buildings in the town which were historical and prominent and stated that the team would be working to ensure its significance was retained and enhanced. Councillor Carter felt pleased to see that heritage had been added to the proposal list, as there was lots of history within Thurrock that could be improved and celebrated. Councillor Snell felt that it was good to see youth facilities and heritage on the proposal list. He added that the jetty would improve sustainable travel options in the borough and could increase footfall and business opportunities within Tilbury. The Strategic Lead Regeneration added that Tilbury town had already undergone some improvement works, such as new cycle facilities and planting, and some proposals would not be brought forward in this funding round, but would be considered in the longer term.

Councillor Allen agreed that a youth centre would improve the outcomes for the children of Tilbury, but felt opposed to the proposed site. Councillor Raper asked if other alternatives had been considered for the youth centre site. The Strategic Lead Regeneration stated that he would share the analysis of the alternative sites with the Committee, but explained that if the proposal did go ahead the land could contain a covenant to ensure the land was safeguarded.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**1. That the Committee noted and commented on the report, including the Cabinet recommendations as set out below:**

***“That Cabinet:***

***Approve the Tilbury Town Fund Programme and Budget allocations as set out in Table 1 of this report.***

***Delegates authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationship and the Assistant Director of Legal Services, to approve the Business Care Summaries, and agree lease, development and contractual terms (including approval to go to tender and award) to support the delivery of the programme.***



***Confirms agreement to underwrite the proposed financial settlement to enable the delivery of the Thurrock Youth Zone, as set out in Section 8.1 of this report, and that officers actively seek alternative revenue streams to support the long-term delivery of the Youth Zone.”***

## **7. Work Programme**

Members agreed to add the following items to the Work Programme:

1. Stanford-le-Hope Interchange project at every Committee meeting
2. Grays underpass
3. Grays regeneration masterplan
4. Purfleet regeneration
5. Tilbury Town Fund to come back to Committee
6. Parking Strategy Update
7. Local Plan Update to be presented in October, and reports from the Local Development Plan Task Force to be shared with PTR Members.

**The meeting finished at 8.42 pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**