

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 23rd August, 2017

SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor O'Donnell (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff (Alderman Haire);
Aldermen Kingston, McGimpsey and L. Patterson; and
Councillors Boyle, Dorrian, Dudgeon,
Graham, Johnston, Magee,
Mullan, O'Hara and Walsh.

Also attended: Alderman Rodgers.

In attendance: Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. N. Gallagher, Director of City Centre Development; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported from the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Copeland.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Presentation

Transport NI – Spring Report 2017

The Committee was advised that Mr. K. Monaghan, Eastern Divisional Manager Transport NI, Mr. T. McClay, Belfast North Section Engineer, Mr. G. Doherty, Belfast South Section Engineer, and Mr. C. de Burca, Director for Transport Projects and Business Services in the Department for Infrastructure, were in attendance and they were admitted to the meeting and welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. Monaghan advised the Committee that there were significant pressures on both capital and resource funding for the year 2017/18. He explained that Transport NI would continue to develop resurfacing and traffic management schemes to enhance safety, improve traffic flow and provide measures for pedestrians and cyclists. The Members were also advised that the Department would also continue to bid in monitoring rounds for further capital funding for structural maintenance to maintain the integrity of the road network.

He provided the Committee with updates on the main strategic transportation schemes for the city. Regarding the York Street Interchange, he advised the Members that the tender process to appoint a contractor to bring the scheme to construction-ready stage had been completed but that the tender award could not occur due to a legal

**Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 23rd August, 2017**

challenge. He advised the Committee that the legal challenge was ongoing but that he was hopeful that a resolution would be found in the coming months.

He provided the Members with an update on the proposed extension of bus lanes along the M1 and M2, between Ballyskeagh and Black's Road, and between Greencastle and Duncrue Street. He explained to the Committee that a procurement process had been completed in January 2017, with tendered costs significantly higher than expected, and so the contract had not been awarded. He explained that a review of the procurement strategy and any alternative delivery of the scheme was ongoing, to determine if the scheme could be procured in a more cost effective way, or with reduced requirements.

Mr. Monaghan advised the Committee that the Eastern Division had been developing proposals for road improvements along the south section of the City Centre ring. The Members were informed that the Shaftesbury Link scheme would be much reduced in scale from that which featured in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP), with a focus on the needs of public transport, pedestrians and cyclist, as well as general traffic, and would also take cognisance of potential redevelopment opportunities between Sandy Row and Cromac Street.

Mr. de Burca provided the Members with an overview of the works which had been completed across the city in preparation for the Belfast Rapid Transit (BRT) project. He also outlined to the Committee a number of ongoing works, which involved regenerating 22km of road through the east, west and city centre in total. He advised the Committee that the works included updating pavements, traffic signals and lighting along the route, with the addition of accident remedial measures in certain areas. The Members noted that 105 halts would be installed along the route, each with off-board ticketing and validation machines. Mr. de Burca advised the Committee that a major launch of the new vehicles which would be used for BRT would be held in Belgium, where the buses were being made, on 19th October and that the Lord Mayor had been invited to attend.

In response to a Member's question regarding the new BRT ticketing system, the Director of Property and Projects advised the Members that Translink would be attending a future meeting of the Corporate Management Team and that an invitation could be extended to Translink, to attend a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee to provide the Members with an overview of the new ticketing system.

In response to a Member's question as to whether the BRT would be expanded to include a North/South line, Mr. de Burca confirmed that the Department would certainly like to see this happen, but that it would be dependent on funding.

During discussion, Mr. Monaghan explained to the Members that there was a very limited budget for routine maintenance and, as a result, less grass cutting, weed spraying and gullyclearings had taken place than in some previous years. He stated, however, that if a Member had any safety concerns that they should contact Transport NI to request that the locations be examined.

The Members drew the attention of the officers from Transport NI to a number of other matters, a number of which are set out hereunder:

**Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 23rd August, 2017**

- the presence of large, overhanging bushes along the Westlink which looked precarious;
- to consider reducing the limits of the loading bays in Chichester Street, which were currently 24 hour;
- to consider the installation of a yellow box at the junction of Bridgend/Short Strand/ Newtownards Road to facilitate better traffic flow;
- to consider, in conjunction with the planned BRT works, increasing the size of the yellow box at the junction of Great Victoria Street and the Grosvenor Road;
- to consider whether improved infrastructure works were required, in light of the high number of cruise ships which were now arriving into the city;
- to consider how suppliers could gain vehicular access to the back entrances of those shops which backed onto Bains Place/ Brunswick Street/Amelia Street at Blackstaff Square; and
- to consider the removal of a tree on Ballarat Street, off the Ravenhill Road, which is causing significant drainage issues.

During discussion, Mr. Monaghan advised that, where relevant, action would be taken on these issues by TransportNI if it was deemed necessary after inspection.

After discussion, the Chairperson thanked the representatives from Transport NI for their attendance and they retired from the meeting.

On-Street Car Parking Charges

The Committee was reminded that, at the Council meeting of 1st February 2017, the Council had passed the following Notice of Motion:

“This Council expresses its concern at the 16% increase in on-street car parking charges in Belfast, from £1.20 per hour to £1.40 per hour, announced by the Infrastructure Minister.

This decision will adversely affect City Centre retail trade and will advantage the out-of-town shopping centres which are able to offer free car parking.

The Council agrees to seek an urgent meeting with the Minister to ensure that there is improved consultation with all stakeholders, including the Council, regarding the transportation issues within the City, including for those who use cars and public transport and those who cycle and walk.”

The Members were reminded that the Committee, at its meeting of 12th April, had noted a response from the former Minister for Infrastructure, Chris Hazzard MLA, which stated that he would be unable to attend a meeting, due to the upcoming election, but that his Departmental representatives would be in a position to attend such a meeting. The Committee had agreed, at that meeting, that a representative from the Department be invited to a future meeting to discuss the issue of on-street car parking charges.

**Special City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 23rd August, 2017**

Mr. de Burca outlined to the Committee that the increase in on-street car parking charges, from £1.20 to £1.40 per hour, had been operational since February 2017, and that it had been the first increase since 2011. He explained that there were significant pressures on finances within the Department and that the income from on-street car parking charges had gone towards road, traffic and light maintenance across the network.

The Committee noted the information provided.

Transport Update (including Belfast Rapid Transit)

The Committee noted that TransportNI was taking forward legislation to introduce and revoke waiting restrictions, as part of the Belfast Rapid Transit project, at the following locations:

- Andersonstown Road from Whiterock Road to Finaghy Road North;
- Upper Newtownards Road from Albertbridge Road to Sandown Road;
- Upper Newtownards Road from Sandown Road to Knock Road;
- Falls Road and Divis Street from Grosvenor Road to Millfield;
- Stewartstown Road from Michael Ferguson Roundabout to McKinsty Road;
- Stewartstown Road from Finaghy Road North to Michael Ferguson Roundabout; and
- Albertbridge Road from Castlereagh Street to the Newtownards Road.

The Committee also:

- noted that legislation was being taken forward to prohibit all U-turn movements at the Kennedy Way and B102 Andersonstown Road junction to facilitate Belfast Rapid Transit; and
- agreed that it had no objections to the abandonment of a bus turning circle on the Lisburn Road, opposite the Park Royal housing development.

Chairperson