

## **Economy, Employment and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2010**

#### **Present:**

Councillor Cameron – In the Chair  
Councillors Barrett, Bethell, Bridges, Green, Hackett, E Newman, Parkinson, Pritchard, Smitheman and Walters

Sir Richard Leese, Leader of the Council  
Councillor Cowell, Executive Member for Environment  
Councillor Keegan, Assistant Executive Member for Employment and Skills  
Martin Lax, Representative from Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority  
Eddie Smith, Chief Executive, New East Manchester

#### **Apologies:**

Councillor Siddiqi

### **EES/10/06          Urgent Business**

A report on the Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre was submitted as urgent business.

#### **Decision:**

To agree to receive the Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre report as urgent business.

### **EES/10/07          Minutes**

#### **Decision**

To agree the minutes of 6 January 2010 as a correct record.

### **EES/10/08          Information and Overview report**

A report of the City Solicitor was submitted providing information about the Committee's work programme and relevant issues affecting the Committee's remit. Members were invited to consider the highlighted topics and agree the draft work programme.

#### **Decision**

To accept the Committee's work programme.

### **EES/10/09          Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Transport, which set out the

details of the public consultation for the draft Transport Strategy for Manchester City Centre. The draft strategy looked at how the city centre was likely to develop and grow over the period to 2020. Forecasts had suggested that employment could grow by up to 50,000 jobs during this period. The strategy examined the effect on the city's transport infrastructure and how it would need to adapt to accommodate this growth.

The Deputy Head of Transport informed the Committee that the consultation was launched on 11 January 2010 and would finish on 22 March 2010. In summary, the strategy proposed that a greater part of the forecast demand would be met by increasing the capacity of the public transport network through increased train and Metrolink services, improvements to the cross-city bus package and encouraging cycling through improved cycle facilities.

Members discussed the details of the cross-city bus package review. The consultation document highlighted that there were several dedicated bus interchanges situated across the city centre. The most popular location for bus termination was Parker Street, which was currently operating above its design capacity, creating congestion and pedestrian safety issues around access on Portland Street and Mosley Street. Members were concerned at the proposal to reduce the scale, and eventually remove the facility for bus services at Parker Street, commenting that this station provided the majority of bus services accessing the south of the city. The Deputy Head of Transport assured members that alternative facilities would have to be in place before the Parker Street facility was removed.

A member raised some concerns about the number of buses travelling along Portland Street, particularly where there were several nearly empty same-service buses travelling at the same time. He asked whether there were any plans to review the options for controlling the number of buses. The Deputy Head of Transport informed members that GMPTE acknowledged that the number of buses caused congestion in some areas of the city. The Cross City Bus Package review would look at the rationalisation of bus travel within the city centre to ensure more efficient use of buses and travel across the city.

A member asked about the reasons why Shudehill Interchange was not running to its operational capacity, and whether bus operators were charged for using services there. The Deputy Head of Transport confirmed that bus operators were required to pay a departure charge to support the facilities at Shudehill. One of the key challenges facing GMPTE was to persuade bus operators to use the facility, as they were not required to terminate services at a designated interchange. He added that there was potential to extend the use of Shudehill Interchange by reducing the number of on-street termination facilities in the city centre to reduce congestion during busy periods.

Members queried the extent to which the proposed changes could be achieved by voluntary Quality Partnership Schemes (QPS) and asked whether the Council would have to introduce Quality Bus Contracts (QBC). The Executive Member for Environment informed members that the preferred option was to work in partnership with bus operators to make improvements to services in terms of punctuality and reliability, vehicle and driver quality, affordable fares, better interchange and

integration (including ticketing) between buses and with other modes of transport. He added that implementing Quality Bus Contracts took a particularly long time to put in place and enforce. The Chief Executive agreed with the Executive Member for Environment and added that it was possible to achieve these changes through voluntary QPS agreements. He also confirmed that no other local authority had enforced Quality Bus Contracts because they could not reach a voluntary agreement with local bus operators.

Members asked whether local residents would be consulted where changes affected the services they used. They felt that local residents and bus passengers should be made aware of route changes and potential increased congestion along certain streets. The Roads and Bridges Manager, Highway Services assured members that further consultation would be carried out.

A member referred to the improvements to the quality of bus fleets and asked what progress had been made to improve buses that produced the most carbon emissions. The Deputy Head of Transport informed members that many operators had made significant improvements to the quality of their bus fleet with almost 20% of vehicles operating in Manchester, having Euro IV engine emission standards or above. However, there were still a large number of buses in operation that fell below expected environmental requirements with almost 50% of the fleet failing to meet the lower Euro III standard. He added that some of the bus operators used older buses and provided lower fares to target niche markets such as students. The Council was working with such providers to implement a QPS to introduce a minimum standard for buses. The Council had also been awarded funds through the DfT Green Bus Fund for the new fleet of Metroshuttle buses to be more environmentally friendly diesel-electric hybrid vehicles.

Members referred to the potential for road closures and asked what measures would be taken to address the current poor signage for drivers in places where road closures and diversions were in place. The Deputy Head of Transport informed the Committee that the strategy recognised the need for improved signage for passengers and car drivers. The Council would work closely with GMPTE and other agencies to ensure that traffic moved as smoothly as possible during construction works.

The Committee discussed the proposed introduction of a cycle hire scheme at Piccadilly Station and asked about the details of the benefits to commuters and residents. The Executive Member for Environment advised that the Council would work with the City of Salford, the Universities and private sector interests to examine the feasibility and delivery of providing a network of cycle hire schemes through out the city. It was anticipated that the first one would open at Piccadilly Station by 2011, where commuters, residents or visitors could hire a bike to get around the city. This scheme would go alongside improved cycle parking facilities and cycle routes throughout the city.

Overall, members welcomed the strategy, noting that it presented many sensible options for improving the public transport infrastructure across Manchester. Members requested that they were kept informed of the results of the consultation.

**Decision:**

1. To note the report
2. To request that the Deputy Head of Transport report the results of the consultation to a future meeting of the Committee.

**EES/10/10                      Mayfield Strategic Regeneration Framework**

The Committee received a report of the Chief Executive, which informed members of the proposals for a new Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for the Mayfield area of Piccadilly. The report outlined the detail of the draft SRF, which had been developed in partnership with the City Council, British Rail Board (Residuary) Limited (BRBR), Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE), The Office of Government Commerce (OGC), and Government Office North West (GONW). The SRF would provide the context within which the full economic, social and environmental potential of the Mayfield area could be brought forward, through the regeneration of the area, anchored by the development of a proposed Civil Service Campus for the North.

The Chief Executive informed members that the proposed relocation of civil servants to the Mayfield site would provide an opportunity for the regeneration of the whole area around Piccadilly station, creating further opportunities for creating jobs in Manchester. The Chancellor committed to the relocation of civil servants within his pre-budget report and the move would mainly be funded by central government.

The Mayfield site had been identified as the preferred location for a new campus bringing together civil servants from across the city region and also seeking to attract departmental relocations and jobs from London as part of the Government's Operational Efficiency Programme. The campus would have the potential to house some 5,000 civil servants by 2015. The proposals had also been developed to accommodate any future line extensions for Piccadilly Station that arose from the High Speed Rail Link proposals. Members felt that the proposals provided a welcome opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint of civil service buildings. A member asked whether the design of the civil service buildings had been agreed and how this would fit into the makeup of the local area. The Leader of the Council advised that the design of each aspect of the proposals would be agreed on an individual basis but would fit in with the composition of the area.

Members asked about how the redevelopment of the Mayfield area would be marketed to businesses to occupy the retail space. Members were particularly keen to know if there was any scope to encourage small independent retailers to take up retail space at the new development. A member referred to a good example in San Francisco, America where independent retailers were offered reduced rent in large shopping malls. The Chief Executive said that the Government Office for the Northwest (GONW) had already produced a brochure to market the redevelopment of Mayfield. There were also a number of opportunities to establish different activities to support small businesses but it was too early in the development of the proposals to be specific. The relocation of civil servants was subject to the outcome of a feasibility study currently being undertaken by the Government.

Members welcomed the Mayfield SRF, commenting that it would attract a larger number of families to live in the city centre. Members felt that there would also be increased demand for three and four bedroom family homes within the city centre boundaries. The Leader of the Council welcomed the comments, agreeing that there would be demand for city centre accommodation. He added that approximately 90% of city centre accommodation was occupied, with a number of properties being vacant due to turnover and some areas where there had been a history of bad management. These issues of bad management were being addressed.

Overall, the Committee welcomed the proposals and the efforts made by the Council in the development of the SRF. Some members were concerned that the plans were at risk depending on the outcome of the forthcoming general election. The Leader of the Council assured members that any Government would face the same need to relocate to reduce the long-term costs of the civil service.

### **Decision**

1. To note the intention to relocate 5,000 civil service jobs into a new campus at Mayfield, subject to the outcome of the Government's feasibility study currently under way.
2. To note the proposed new Strategic Regeneration Framework for Mayfield.

### **EES/10/11 City Fringe Spatial Development Framework**

A report of the Chief Executive and the Chief Executive of New East Manchester (NEM) was submitted for consideration. The report asked the Executive to endorse a series of proposals that had emerged from the City Fringe Spatial Study, a report commissioned jointly between the City Council and New East Manchester. The Spatial Study proposals would help facilitate the commercial expansion of the city centre north and east wards along with providing improved access and connectivity to and from the neighbourhoods within North and East Manchester. The Committee was invited to comment on these proposals before they were considered by the Executive on 10 March 2010.

The Chief Executive, NEM informed members that the purpose of this more detailed review of the "City Fringe" area was to bring forward a medium to long term strategy to ensure that neighbourhoods on the north and east periphery of the city were more effectively connected with the city centre. The Spatial Study contained recommendations to include within an appropriate strategy for the City Fringe including proposal to create sustainable hotel developments along Great Ancoats Street, increase convenience retail provision and the need for a supermarket to service residents in the city centre.

A member sought clarification on the reasons for the slowdown in residential and office markets, which had led to a number of proposed sites being put forward for hotel use. The Leader of the Council informed members that some developers had experienced difficulties in raising finance for new build residential and office developments as many were reliant on obtaining 100% mortgages to finance building

activity. The national downturn in the housing market had temporarily reduced the number of properties being sold but there was still significant demand for rented properties in the area. The Chief Executive, NEM added that many of the proposed sites for hotel developments were not likely to be viable and it was important to encourage the right mix of hotels to complement the wider market across the city and also underpin the regeneration of the area.

Members referred to the Transport Strategy for the City Centre, which they had considered earlier in the meeting, and asked how the proposals for the development of the City Fringe would integrate with the Transport Strategy. Some members were concerned that the recommendation to increase usage of the Intermediate Ring Road and Great Ancoats Street were at odds with the aims of the Transport Strategy to direct road traffic out of the city centre. The Chief Executive, NEM informed members that it was inevitable the Great Ancoats Street would always be a busy route into the city centre and that the proposals to increase the intermediate ring road set out a way of co-ordinating the level of traffic accessing the area, based on examples from how other cities had managed traffic in regeneration areas. He also acknowledged that the long-term aspiration of the transport strategy was to move road traffic away from the city centre.

Members discussed the proposed increased provision for convenience shopping in the study area and asked about the extent to which, increased provision would improve the local area and how it would impact on the growth in regeneration areas in the north of the city. The Leader of the Council said that there was demand for increased convenience shopping in the area, which would increase further once the extension of the Metrolink to Sportcity was completed. The Metrolink extension also improved links with the north of the city encouraging direct travel between the two areas and increasing the potential number of visitors to retail parks.

Some members felt that there was a risk that pedestrians would be discouraged from using Great Ancoats Street as an access route to the city centre due to poor visual appearance. They suggested that measures be taken to improve the visual appearance of the area and to also improve links with the park and Ashton Canal to encourage pedestrians. The Chief Executive, NEM told members that there were several things that could be done to encourage pedestrians to overcome psychological barriers to use the area as a walking route into the city centre such as changing the street lighting around Great Ancoats Street. He referred to specific examples such as Newton Street where bright white lights had been installed to replace older yellow lighting to provide a pedestrian friendly area.

**Decision:**

To note the report