NORTH EAST OF SCOTLAND TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

Minute of Meeting of the North East Scotland Transport Partnership Board

Aberdeen, Friday, 21 August 2015

Present: Councillor Milne (Chairperson); Councillor Argyle (Vice Chairperson); and Councillors Jackie Dunbar, Finlayson and Grant (Aberdeen City Council); Councillors Clark, Ford and Johnston (as substitute for Councillor Aitchison)
(Aberdeenshire Council); and Duncan Cameron, Gerry Donald and Sandra MacDonald (Non Councillor Members).

In attendance: Dr Margaret Bochel and Stephen Archer (Advisers to the Board); Derick Murray, Rab Dickson and Jennifer Anderson (Nestrans); David Jennings (SDPA); Ross Brennan and Paul Finch (Aberdeenshire Council); Iain Robertson and Emma Parr (Aberdeen City Council); Sarah Donald and Lisa Thomson (Deloitte) (for item 4); and Georgia Smith (SDPA Student, as an observer).

Apologies: Councillor Aitchison.

OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chair announced that this would be Dr Margaret Bochel's last meeting as an advisor to the Board and thanked her for her advice and support throughout her time with the Board. The Chair also stated that this would be Iain Robertson's last Board meeting as Clerk and wished Mr Robertson well on his future endeavours. The Chair introduced Ross Brennan to the Board and advised that Mr Brennan would have a responsibility for the Board's budgetary matters. The Chair also welcomed Lisa Thomson and Sarah Donald (Deloitte) to the meeting and informed the Board that they would speak to Item 8a on today's agenda. The Chair proposed that Budgetary Matters be considered by the Board after the Minute of Previous Meeting and the Board concurred.

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS

2. The Chair proposed that item 12 of today's agenda be considered with the press and public excluded.

The Board resolved:-
in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of item 12 of business as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in paragraph 1 of Schedule 7(A) of the Act.

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MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The Board had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 17 June 2015.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the minute as a correct record.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND THE EXTERNAL AUDITORS REPORT TO THE PARTNERSHIP 2014/15

4. With reference to article 15 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Treasurer with the submitted audited Statement of Accounts for 2014/15 for approval by the Partnership Board and for the information of the Board, the independent auditor's report on the audit.

The report recommended –
that the Board –
(a) approve for signature the audited Statement of Accounts for 2014/15;
(b) consider the Independent Auditor's Report; and
(c) agree that a £10 charge for a printed copy of the Statement of Accounts be made and that the Statements can be accessed and downloaded free of charge from the Nestrans website.

Ross Brennan summarised the Statement of Accounts and disseminated revised wording for page 76 of the report which had been necessitated by a late change in regulations which stated that the Statement of Accounts had to be approved and signed by the Chair at the Board meeting. Lisa Thomson and Sarah Donald (Deloitte) further advised that a modified audit option would be issued with an analysis on presumed risk and that the £94,000 accrual had been identified as an error and had been corrected by Nestrans.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to approve for signature the audited Statement of Accounts for 2014/15;
(ii) to agree that a £10 charge for a printed copy of the Statement of Accounts be made and that the Statements can be accessed and downloaded free of charge from the Nestrans website; and
(iii) to thank Aberdeenshire Financial staff who helped prepare the Statement of Accounts which met the approval of external auditors.

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BUDGET MATTERS 2015/16

5. With reference to article 14 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Treasurer that provided an update on the Partnership's 2015/16 monitoring and forecast outturn position and to consider any budget or monitoring issues that may arise.

The report recommended –
that the Board –
(a) note the monitoring position and forecast presented in Appendix 1; and
(b) agree to the work on the variable message signs to be completed, with the £93,537 being funded from the partner contributions which were made in 2014/15.

Ross Brennan spoke to the report and advised that the Board were being asked to agree that completion of the variable message signs project be accommodated within the budget.

The Board resolved:-
to agree to the work on the variable message signs to be completed, with the £93,537 being funded from the partner contributions which were made in 2014/15.

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015/16

6. With reference to article 15 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Treasurer that sought agreement from the Partnership to the proposed Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2015/16.

The report recommended –
that the Board approve the revised Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix A and B of the report.

Ross Brennan advised that there had been no significant changes since the previous year's strategy and he also informed the Board that there had been a negligible impact on their investment strategy due to low interest rates and he estimated that this would continue in the short term.

The Board resolved:-
to approve the revised Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix A and B of the report.

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

7. With reference to article 5 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Director that updated members on liaison with other RTP's and with Scottish Government and other organisations.

The report recommended –
that the Board note progress on liaison arrangements with other RTPs, the Scottish Government and others and arrangements for future meetings.

The Director spoke to the report and highlighted the following areas:

With reference to the Laurencekirk report, he advised that the report had been fully endorsed by Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee on 20 August 2015;

With reference to Tunnels at Aberdeen Station, he explained that a meeting had been scheduled with Transport Scotland for 8 September to discuss the dualling of the tunnels to the North of Aberdeen Station and the development of a local rail service;

With reference to Insch Station, the Vice Chair informed the Board that the Infrastructure Services Committee had been notified that proposals to improve Insch Station would not be taken forward by Transport Scotland due to landowner issues and he intimated his disappointment with this decision;

With reference to Network Rail's modelling for passenger numbers in the North East, the Director explained that Nestrans had provided Network Rail with additional information on population growth and employment in the North East to better inform their modelling as in the past they tended to underestimate the number of rail users in the North East;

With reference to the East Coast Mainline, he advised that they were looking for an ambassador from the North East and explained that if any board member knew of a prominent business person interested in this position they should contact him.

With reference to HS2, Phase Three, the Director advised the Board that no decision was likely until after the 2016 Scottish Parliamentary elections;

With reference to meeting with the Minister for Transport, the Director informed the Board that the Chair, Vice Chair and himself would attend this meeting in Edinburgh on 16 September 2015 and would raise issues pertinent to Nestrans such as the Tunnels to the North of Aberdeen Station and development at Laurencekirk and on the A96;

With reference to the Board's next meeting on 9 October, he asked members to consider shortening the business meeting in order to undertake an extended workshop session that would focus on issues such as the AWPR and the City Centre Master Plan.

Thereafter members expressed their concern with regards to the lack of progress on the dualling of the track through the tunnels to the North of Aberdeen Station; and there were further questions on the impact of overcrowding on trains in the North East; and members stressed how important it was for key decision makers at Network Rail and Transport Scotland to have the most up to date information on passenger numbers in the North East to better inform their projections and future service provision.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to request that Transport Scotland be made aware of the Board's profound disappointment with regards to their decision not to satisfactorily improve Insch Station and to request that the Director make further enquiries into this matter;
(ii) to agree that the Board's next business meeting on 9 October be shortened to accommodate an extended workshop session;
(iii) to request that the Director schedule a meeting with Councillor Ford that would focus on proposed upgrades to the Aberdeen-Inverness railway line; and
(iv) otherwise to note the progress on liaison arrangements with other RTPs, Scottish Government and others and arrangements for future meetings.

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT FUND UPDATE

8. With reference to article 6 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Director that informed members on progress in reviewing the STF guidance and on payments received and agreements made in relation to the Strategic Transport Fund to date.

The report recommended –
that the Board -
(a) note the key changes being made to the guidance and the timescales set out by the SDPA for this; and
(b) note the payments made into the funds to date.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Dr Margaret Bochel declared an interest due to her future employment with Burness Paull and left the meeting.

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The Director spoke to the report and advised that the statutory Supplementary Guidance had been approved by the SDPA at their meeting on 25 June and had been referred to both Councils for approval. He also highlighted that a legal challenge against the Supplementary Guidance had been lodged in the Court of Session and he was unsure when this matter would be determined.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to note the key changes being made to the guidance and the timescales set out by the SDPA for this; and
(ii) to note the payments made into the funds to date.

NESTRANS CLIMATE CHANGE DUTIES

9. The Board had before it a report by the Director that informed members of the new responsibilities being placed on public sector bodies in respect of their duties and responsibilities in relation to the Climate Change Act.

The report recommended –
that the Board note the report and the requirement for Nestrans to report on its activities and policies in respect of Climate Change Duties.

Rab Dickson spoke to the report and advised that Nestrans would now be required to report on its activities and policies in respect of Climate Change Duties and directed members' attention to the table he had prepared which recorded Nestrans' Carbon Emissions for 2014. Mr Dickson informed the Board that their carbon emissions were minimal when set in a national context with the majority of emissions being caused by domestic flights and he highlighted that it would be a challenge to identify how they could reduce their emissions from the 7,421.14 kg CO2e reported in 2014 for future years.

Thereafter there were questions on the impact of air travel on carbon emissions, the possibilities for increasing Nestrans' use of renewable energy and combined heat and power systems and the measures that could be adopted to ensure that reporting was robust and open to peer review.

The Board resolved:-
to note the report and the requirement for Nestrans to report on its activities and policies in respect of Climate Change Duties.

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FRASERBURGH AND PETERHEAD TO ABERDEEN STRATEGIC TRANSPORT STUDY

10. With reference to article 12 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, The Board had before it a report by the Director that provided an update on progress regarding the ongoing strategic transport study on the corridor between Fraserburgh and Peterhead to Aberdeen.

The report recommended –
that the Board note the contents of the report and the Baseline report.

Rab Dickson spoke to the report and advised that a series of consultations had been undertaken, including a members briefing and thereafter they had received a baseline report from the consultants and he highlighted that the Executive Summary was attached in Appendix 1. He also informed members that Nestrans had received a draft Pre- Appraisal report from the consultants and he would endeavour to report on this study at the next meeting.

Thereafter there were questions on freight capacity and facilities for refrigeration; and how infrequently the report referred to rail development.

The Board resolved:-
to note the contents of the report and the Baseline report.

HEALTH AND TRANSPORT ACTION PLAN

11. With reference to article 12 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Director that provided an update on the Health and Transport Action Plan (HTAP) and sought agreement for extending the post of the Programme Manager.

The report recommended –
that the Board note the contents of the report and endorse the appointment of a Programme Manager to support HTAP for a further two years.

The Director spoke to the report and advised that the initial two year fixed term contract for the Programme Manager was due to expire in October and requested the Board's approval for an extension to this post. He also made the Board aware that Nestrans had not yet confirmed future budgets and there was minimal to negligible risk that this commitment could not be fulfilled.

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The Board resolved:-
to note the contents of the report and endorse the appointment of a Programme Manager to support HTAP for a further two years.

PROGRESS REPORT

12. With reference to article 12 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it the progress report.

With reference to IC2b on page 45 there was a query on whether the timings and targets referred to financial years or calendar years. Jennifer Anderson (Transport Executive, Nestrans) advised that IC2b referred to financial years;

With reference to IC1a on page 41 members highlighted that issues had been identified with regards to dualling the tracks on the Aberdeen to Inverness line and requested that this wording be reviewed; and

With reference to 1C3e on page 52 Councillor Clark requested an update on Expanded Real Time Passenger Information and Stephen Archer advised that he would provide an update on the system's progress.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to request that the wording for IC1a on page 41 be revised to reflect the current status of progress and development;
(ii) to request a further update on the status of Expanded Real Time Passenger Information; and
(iii) otherwise to note the progress report.

PUBLICATIONS AND CONSULTATIONS

13. With reference to article 13 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Director that informed members of recent publications and consultation papers of interest and to agree a response where possible.

The report recommended –
that the Board note the content of the report and approve the attached Appendix as Nestrans response to the consultation on extending the block exemption for bus operators on ticketing schemes.

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The Board resolved:-
to note the content of the report and approve the attached Appendix as Nestrans response to the consultation on extending the block exemption for bus operators on ticketing schemes.

INFORMATION BULLETIN

14. With reference to article 16 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Director which provided information and updates to members on a number of matters not requiring a decision as follows.

The report recommended –
that the Board note the contents of the report.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Ford declared an interest due to his joint ownership of an air plot on the path of the proposed third runway at Heathrow but did not feel that this interest required him to leave the meeting.

The Director spoke to the report and he highlighted that the Airports Commission had recommended that the development of a third runway at Heathrow Airport would provide the greatest strategic and economic benefit to the UK. The report also noted that regional access to Heathrow should be expanded and the Director explained to the Board that this was clear evidence that their lobbying in conjunction with other regional authorities had had a positive impact on the Commission's final recommendations. The Director also informed the Board that Aberdeen City Council (ACC) had been developing proposals for a bid to the European Commission's Civitas Programme to fund the development of a proposed new harbour at Nigg.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to congratulate ACC and Stagecoach East Scotland on their success at the Scottish Transport Awards; and
(ii) otherwise to note the information bulletin

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

15. With reference to article 17 of the minute of the previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Director that outlined recent and forthcoming conferences of interest to Nestrans.

The Board resolved:-
(i) to approve the Chair's and the Director's attendance at the Transport for Regional Growth in South East Scotland conference in Edinburgh on 5 November 2015 at £50 per head; and
(ii) otherwise to note the report.

PENDING BUSINESS AND REPORTS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

16. With reference to article 18 of the minute of its previous meeting of 17 June 2015, the Board had before it a report by the Director which advised of progress on pending business requested by the Board and major reports scheduled for forthcoming Board meetings, and provided the opportunity to add to or amend this scheduling.

The report recommended –
that the Board note the report on pending business and agree the provisional scheduling of major reports to future Board meetings.

The Board resolved:-
to note the report and agree the provisional scheduling of major reports to future Board meetings.

ADOPTION OF ABERDEENSHIRE'S REVISED STAFF TERMS AND CONDITIONS

17. The Board had before it a report by the Director which advised members on a recent re-grading exercise of four Nestrans posts, which resulted in proposed grade increases to three of the posts and sought agreement to implement the revised grades. The proposal would also to be for Nestrans to fully adopt the new Aberdeenshire Council terms and conditions.

The report recommended –
that the Board –
(a) fully adopt the amended Aberdeenshire Council Terms and Conditions. The changes would be implemented following Board approval of the report; and
(b) agree to the proposed grade changes for the 2 x Transport Executives and Transport Strategy Manager and authorise the implementation of these changes. The changes would be implemented following Board approval of the report.

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The Board resolved:-

(i) to fully adopt the amended Aberdeenshire Council Terms and Conditions. The changes would be implemented following Board approval of the report; and

(ii) to agree to the proposed grade changes for the 2 x Transport Executives and Transport Strategy Manager and authorise the implementation of these changes. The changes would be implemented following Board approval of the report.

- RAMSAY MILNE, Chairperson.