

Minutes

EXTERNAL SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE

12 January 2021

VIRTUAL



HILLINGDON
LONDON

	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors John Riley (Chairman), Nick Denys (Vice-Chairman), Simon Arnold, Stuart Mathers (Opposition Lead), Ali Milani, June Nelson and Devi Radia</p> <p>Also Present: David Brough, Hayes Town Partnership Toby Elliott, Head of Communications (Western Route), Network Rail Matthew Frost, Group Station Manager (West), MTR Elizabeth Line John Geary, Head of Customer Experience, MTR Elizabeth Line Richard Griffiths, Head of Communications (Projects) - Wales and Western, Network Rail Ajaib Singh Puar, Chairman, Hayes Town Business Forum Colin Prime, Programme Sponsor for Network Rail's Project Works, Network Rail Omar Zaman, Hayes & Harlington Station Manager, MTR Elizabeth Line</p> <p>LBH Officers Present: David Knowles (Transport & Projects Senior Manager) and Nikki O'Halloran (Democratic Services Manager)</p>
20.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TO REPORT THE PRESENCE OF ANY SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (<i>Agenda Item 1</i>)</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
21.	<p>EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (<i>Agenda Item 3</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That all items of business be considered in public.</p>
22.	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 10 NOVEMBER 2020 (<i>Agenda Item 4</i>)</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 be agreed as a correct record.</p>
23.	<p>GREAT WESTERN LINE (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed those present to the meeting. Mr Toby Elliott, Head of Communications (Western Route) at Network Rail (NR), advised that NR was responsible for the above ground works on the east and west side of the Crossrail works. This work had included upgrades to the track and improvements to signalling. It had also included the extension of electrification from Heathrow to Cardiff and Reading to Newbury. Mr Elliott noted that, although a new timetable had been introduced in December 2019, there had since been changes made to the timetable as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Mr Colin Prime, Programme Sponsor for Network Rail's Crossrail Project Works,</p>

understood residents' and Members' frustration that the works at Hayes & Harlington and West Drayton stations had not yet been completed. Despite the pandemic, progress was being made at these two stations and the structure at Hayes & Harlington was now starting to take shape and was on track for completion in the early autumn of 2021. Lift shafts and footbridges had been installed.

Mr Richard Griffiths, Head of Communications (Projects) - Wales and Western at NR, advised that NR had produced a monthly briefing for stakeholders to provide updates on the progress of the works being undertaken. He suggested that, if any Member wanted to receive this monthly update, they should contact him and he would be happy to add them to the distribution.

Mr David Brough, Chair of Hayes Town Partnership (HTP), advised that passenger drop off continued to be a problem because NR had sold off the land adjoining Hayes & Harlington station to Ballymore for the High Point development. Ballymore had employed a parking enforcement officer to issue parking tickets costing £100 to anyone dropping passengers off in Station Approach or turning in the road and he believed that an adequate solution had not yet been found. Following intervention, Ballymore had erected clearer signage to notify drivers of the enforcement action being undertaken.

Mr Ajaib Puar Singh, Chairman of Hayes Town Business Forum, noted that the businesses and residents of Hayes were pleased that improvements were being made to the station and to the town centre. However, if residents and visitors were receiving parking tickets, this was likely to influence whether or not they came back to the town again which would have an impact on the people and businesses in Hayes.

There had been a long-standing challenge with regard to drivers being issued with parking tickets when dropping rail passengers off in Station Approach, Hayes, which was a particular issue for those passengers with mobility issues. Mr Griffiths advised that two drop off spaces had recently been proposed as well as two long stay reduced mobility spaces. This issue had been high on the agenda and was now in the design stage. Mr Brough believed that two drop off spaces would be inadequate as the queue of cars wanting to drop off passengers at times extended into Station Road.

Mr David Knowles, the Council's Head of Transport and Town Centre Projects, advised that the issue of disabled and drop off parking spaces had been a topic of discussion for a long time. The challenge was that the land and Station Approach next to the lower entrance at Hayes & Harlington station was privately owned by Ballymore. Although negotiations had started with Ballymore some years previously, no progress had been made at that time so the new proposal for two drop off spaces and two mobility spaces was thought to be a step in the right direction. In addition, the Council would be putting in a kiss-and-ride facility in Blythe Road which would have a stop and drop facility and significant work would be undertaken to improve the subway access to the station. Mr Singh noted that this work would need to include improvements to the lighting so that the elderly and vulnerable felt safe when using it.

Mr Knowles noted that Ballymore had been dealing with other issues in relation to the building itself so had been somewhat predisposed. He also noted that the residents of High Point Village paid a service charge to Ballymore. As such, Ballymore might feel that the use of its land for drop off and mobility spaces might mean that this charge could be challenged. Mr Elliott would make enquiries to establish whether NR had previously had any dealings with Ballymore elsewhere in the country.

Mr Brough advised that HTP had been set up more than 15 years ago to address the

decline of Hayes and promote economic regeneration. HPT had been made up of a range of organisations including Hillingdon Chamber of Commerce, Brunel University, Uxbridge College and various employers in Hayes who were big supporters of Crossrail and had endeavoured to promote the station regeneration project. However, it was difficult to determine which organisation was responsible for different elements of the rail related work being undertaken.

Mr Elliott advised that Ms Jo Grew was the industry programme director and acted as a single point of contact for all queries. He agreed to produce a chart for Members of the names and responsibilities of the people involved in the projects and how these all fit together so that it was clear who needed to be contacted various queries.

Mr Brough noted that the Crossrail newsletter was very useful in terms of providing updates on the progress of development works so he included this in the weekly bulletin that he sent out to 500 people / business in Hayes. It was thought that NR and MTR Elizabeth Line (MTREL) had done a reasonable job of keeping residents updated and that disruption was to be expected at times.

Members were advised that the redeveloped West Drayton station was now starting to take shape: the footbridges had been installed and the cladding would be undertaken shortly. Although it had taken a while, NR continued to work closely with MTREL and the work was expected to be completed by the autumn of 2021.

It was noted that Station Approach, the no through road (cul-de-sac) that led to West Drayton station, had been in a bad state and closed for some time. Although the road had been due for repair once the station improvement works had been completed, the sewer underneath the road had collapsed before the work had been completed. There had been some challenge with regard to who was responsible for the repair work. Interim repairs had been undertaken but would only support the weight of light vehicles which meant that buses could still not access the station. A tender exercise had been undertaken to complete the road repairs more thoroughly in the spring so that buses could once again get direct access to the station. Concern was expressed that there had been resultant changes to the bus service but that these changes were not necessarily being communicated effectively. In addition, signage about entrance closures was being placed on the closed entrances which meant that some passengers were unaware of the closure until they actually arrived at the station entrance.

MTREL ran rail services and managed stations on behalf of Transport for London (TfL). Mr John Geary, Head of Customer Experience at MTREL, advised that MTREL had been contracted to operate TfL and future Elizabeth Line services until 2023. The organisation had around 1,000 employees which were predominantly station staff and drivers and staff were available to help passengers all day.

MTREL had ensured that stations were deep cleaned and had worked to improve and upgrade the stations within its responsibility. As the MTREL contract with TfL was based around customer experience and satisfaction, the organisation had focussed on deploying mystery shoppers, tackling fare evasion and maintaining the punctuality of the service. It was noted that any money made by TfL was reinvested back into services. Members noted that there had been improvements to the customer service as well as the reliability of the service provided at West Drayton station since MTREL had taken over.

Members noted that the central part of Crossrail was due to open in 2022. Concern was expressed that the work currently being undertaken would accommodate current

passenger numbers but would not be able to cope with the anticipated increase in passenger flow that would likely come with the opening of Crossrail. Mr Geary assured Members that MTREL's contract to operate had been built around customer perception and service. The organisation did not receive any income from ticket sales but instead had to focus on achieving service standards. When the Elizabeth Line opened in early 2022, the same regime would apply even with an increase in passenger numbers.

As a result of the work undertaken by MTREL to improve the customer experience, the service had been deemed to be the most reliable in the UK with all trains arriving within one minute of the expected arrival time. Fare evasion was at less than 2% and 75% of customers were satisfied with the information that they had received during a disruption (this was thought to be about 25% higher than the industry standard). Staff had been issued with tablets to be able to access information to help passengers in a timely fashion and plants had been included in the station décor to improve the overall ambiance for service users. In addition, 99% of MTREL customers were served within 3 minutes and the organisation had been voted as the best metro operator in the UK in the National Rail Passenger Survey.

Mr Omar Zaman, Hayes & Harlington Station Manager at MTREL, advised that it had been proposed to close the Station Approach entrance to Hayes & Harlington station in November 2020 to mitigate the impact of both the construction work and the pandemic. A route around the station had been developed and implemented to ensure that passengers could move around safely. The new route had created a slight bottleneck in one area so staff had been placed there to manage the situation and disperse groups effectively if they appeared.

Mr Zaman stated that he worked with a publicity team to disseminate information. This ensured that the information circulated was as accurate, detailed and timely as possible. In addition, access closure information was updated online and included detail about how to access the station. Information about closures was also put up in the roads surrounding the station. Mr Frost advised that he would be happy to speak with Councillor Mathers outside of the meeting to identify any further improvements that could be made to this communication around West Drayton station.

Mr Geary advised that that MTREL worked jointly with British Transport Police to keep passengers safe and met on a weekly basis in joint taskforce meetings. Travel Safe Officers and Land Sheriffs had been appointed to work with partners and the *i-Safety* application was available to all staff on their tablets to enable them to easily report low level crimes. The Land Sheriffs had been a joint initiative which had helped to reduce crime at West Drayton station by 45% and by 64% at Hayes & Harlington station. Whilst it was recognised that some of this improvement would be as a result of the pandemic, a proportion would also be as a result of local improvements to the way of working.

Concern was expressed with regard to the station security at the Warwick Road entrance to West Drayton station. It was thought that there had been some instances of anti-social behaviour and violent crime in the area immediately outside of West Drayton Station and that improvements were needed in the communication between British Transport Police, NR and the Council. Mr Geary advised that consideration needed to be given by the Head of Security at NR to ensuring that the NR CCTV network was joined up with that of the Council in terms of complete coverage. Mr Frost noted that a new CCTV system would be included as part of the station rebuild and that this would need a joined-up approach.

Members were advised that twelve community ambassadors had been appointed to help to make the railway more accessible. There had also been 300 lifesaving interventions undertaken by the Samaritans over the last five years, the appointment of a dedicated cycling ambassador and a range of safeguarding events.

Concern was expressed that the communication undertaken in relation to rail related issues was not necessarily as effective as it might be as residents continued to contact Councillors on various issues. Mr Elliott noted that the postal service had been used by NR to send communications out to residents within 250m either side of a project and that 11 pre-notification letters had been sent out in the last 12 months. In addition, posters had been devised with MTREL and put up, and the website was regularly updated with information explaining the current situation. Mr Elliott welcomed any suggestions for improvements to the communication that was put out by NR and MTREL.

Before the pandemic, face-to-face engagement events had been held where residents were able to drop in. Although virtual engagement events had been held as an alternative, it had been disappointing that only 1-2 people generally attended each of these.

Mr Geary advised that MTREL strove to ensure that the right communications were in place. Announcements were made over the public address system, posters were displayed and staff were available to provide passengers with updates. MTREL had also been working with TfL regarding wider communications whereby customers had been emailed directly with information.

The Committee was advised that the number of complaints continued to be monitored and was very low. That said, it was appreciated that there was still more to do and the organisation was open to suggestions for improvement to its communication.

Concern was expressed that construction of the Elizabeth Line was two years overdue. As such, assurance was sought that the development work at Hayes & Harlington station and West Drayton station would be completed by the autumn of 2021. Mr Prime confirmed that both stations would open in the autumn and that this development work had not impacted on the timescales for the construction of the Elizabeth Line. It was noted that there had been some significant delays with the station development work regarding redesign which had taken some time to resolve. In addition, there had been some contractual issues which Mr Prime was confident had now been resolved.

It was noted that some residents had experienced issues with damaged boundaries, fly tipping and vermin on the NR land at the back of their properties. Members asked how the process of resolving these issues could be improved. Mr Elliott recognised that, in the past, NR's performance in relation to these issues had not been as good as it could have been. Over the last year, NR had not been putting down rat traps because of the pandemic. However, the laying of traps had restarted in November 2020 and it was hoped that NR would now be able to keep on top of the vermin issue. That said, it was important that residents, passengers and NR staff played their part in terms of disposing of food waste securely to so as not to attract rats in the first place.

Concern was expressed that overgrown trees and vegetation on NR land had caused damage to neighbouring residential properties even before the onset of the pandemic. There had also been issues raised up to five years previously in relation to damage caused by previous construction works which had not yet been resolved, despite promises from NR to do so. Mr Elliott advised that NR issued letters to residents with a

named person and their direct contact details so that updates and information could be requested. Insofar as vegetation management was concerned, Mr Elliott advised that NR would only take action to resolve the matter if the situation was dangerous. If the situation was not dangerous, then it was likely that no further action would be taken. Mr Elliott offered to meet with Councillor Mathers outside of the meeting to discuss specific incidents in more detail.

RESOLVED: That the discussion be noted.

24. **WORK PROGRAMME** (*Agenda Item 6*)

Consideration was given to the Committee's Work Programme. The Vice Chairman congratulated the Chairman on his imminent appointment to Cabinet and praised his excellent chairmanship during his time at the helm of the External Services Select Committee.

It was noted that the Programme of Meetings 2021/2022 had not been included on the Council agenda for the meeting on 14 January 2021. Instead, it would be considered by the Council at its meeting on 25 February 2021.

It was agreed that the next External Services Select Committee meeting on 9 February 2021 would be virtual. At this meeting, it had previously been agreed that, in addition to an update on post office services, Members would receive and update on the infection prevention and control measures that had been put in place at Hillingdon Hospital, an update on the flu vaccination programme and an update report on the implementation of the recommendations from the GP pressures review that had been considered by Cabinet at the beginning of 2020. Members agreed that the meeting on 9 February 2021 would receive the post office update and GP pressures review update as planned but that they also receive an update on the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine in the Borough including a BAME breakdown for COVID-related deaths and hospital admissions.

The Committee agreed that, instead of attendance at the meeting on 9 February 2021, Hillingdon Clinical Commissioning Group would be asked to provide a briefing note on the effectiveness of the flu vaccination programme for circulation to Members. Furthermore, it was agreed that the meeting on 28 April 2021 receive an update on infection prevention and control measures at Hillingdon Hospital, the new hospital development and a general update from The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (THH). All other Trusts would then be invited to attend the meeting on 29 April 2021 to provide general health updates. The Trust Quality Account reports for 2020/2021 would be reviewed and responded to outside of formal Committee meetings.

It was noted that, if Councillor Denys was elected on 14 January 2021 as Chairman of the External Services Select Committee as proposed, a meeting would be organised for him with the new Chief Executive at THH, Ms Patricia Wright. In addition, the Chairman would need to have regular meetings with NHS England / Improvement regarding the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre review and with Mr Jason Seez at THH regarding the Hillingdon Hospital redevelopment.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme, as amended, be agreed.

The meeting, which commenced at 6.30 pm, closed at 8.19 pm.

--	--

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Nikki O'Halloran on 01895 250472. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

--	--