

MINUTES OF THE CALL IN SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON

7 January 2021

7.30 - 9.28 pm

PRESENT

Sub Committee Members

Councillor David Carter (Chair)
Councillor Emma Toal (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Simon Carter
Councillor Joel Charles
Councillor Bob Davis
Councillor Maggie Hulcoop
Councillor Nancy Watson

Officers

Hannah Criddle, Governance Support Officer
Simon Hill, Head of Governance
Adam Rees, Governance Support Officer

Witnesses

Councillor Danny Purton, Portfolio Holder for Environment
Andrew Bramidge, Head of Environment and Planning

5. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

None.

6. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

7. PROCEDURE FOR THE MEETING

The Chair explained the procedure for the meeting as detailed on the agenda and explained that the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Councillor Danny Purton and Head of Environment and Planning, Andrew Bramidge are in attendance as witnesses to respond to questions by Sub Committee members.

8. CALL IN OF DECISION OF CABINET ON 3 DECEMBER 2020: DEVELOPMENT OF OPTIONS FOR A HARLOW METRO SYSTEM

The Sub Committee received a report that explained the call in process and included the original call in notice signed by Councillors David Carter and Simon Carter.

In accordance with point (i) of the meeting procedure, Councillor Simon Carter outlined the reasons for the call in. These were as detailed in the call in notice signed by himself and Councillor David Carter. He reiterated the request of the call in notice, that the decision be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

In accordance with point (ii) of the meeting procedure, Councillor Purton provided an explanation for the Cabinet's decision on 3 December. He confirmed that an additional paper had been submitted to the Sub Committee which had been published as a supplementary agenda.

In accordance with point (iii) of the meeting procedure, the Sub Committee asked a series of questions of attending witnesses. Councillor Charles asked a series of questions on the decision making process of the report, to understand the value for money and that it achieves the feasibility scores to warrant further discussions. Councillor Charles asked what level of analysis was undertaken to consider alternatives and determine that the Metro system was the most viable to take to Cabinet. Councillor Purton advised that the feasibility study would consider a number of types of modes of transport. Councillor Charles asked whether the Administration had produced a scoring of some sustainable transport options and scoring criteria prior to taking the report to Cabinet. Councillor Purton confirmed that the Council doesn't have any Transport Officers hence why a consultation has been employed to carry out these exercises. Councillor Charles asked whether the Administration had considered whether the affordability of the scheme warranted future progress as Councillor Charles noted that there would be serious challenges around the long-term affordability of the scheme if the subsidy of the scheme hadn't been considered. Councillor Purton noted his technical background and explained that the usual practice for these forms of transport are the Local Authorities providing the infrastructure and the manufacturer and operators providing and running the vehicles.

Councillor Hulcoop asked for clarification on the type of system which might be introduced. Councillor Purton advised that, at this stage, the type of system being considered was a cross between a tram and a bus. The double ended bendy bus would run separate to the highway. Councillor Hulcoop also requested Councillor Purton's comments on support so far received from Essex County Council. Councillor Purton confirmed that no support had been received from Essex County Council so far.

Councillor Toal requested clarification on claims that the Cabinet had been asked to commit to an unknown amount of expenditure. Councillor Purton confirmed that the project is being progressed on an interactive contract he did not state at the meeting that the cost of the project would be £20 million per kilometre.

Councillor Charles asked whether research had been carried out into the attractiveness of inter-Harlow connections and whether this was more needed so than connections outside of Harlow. Councillor Purton advised

there is no comparison between travel inside and outside of the town. The proposal relates to target for sustainable transport within the town. Councillor Charles questioned why the paper provided to AECOM was not provided to the Cabinet in December 2020. Councillor Purton advised that the quote for the feasibility study was received after the Cabinet meeting on 3 December, however, it was satisfactory and what was roughly expected by the Council. The feasibility study would ultimately determine whether it would be worth proceeding with the project. Councillor Charles noted that Councillor Purton had confirmed that the Cabinet had not received the quote when making their decision. Councillor Charles asked what funding model was used to base the feasibility study on. Councillor Purton confirmed that as this stage the feasibility study is high level and does not include that type of detail. Councillor Charles asked what assumption the Council has made in terms of the potential private investment fund as this will be a key indicator for the potential viability of the scheme. Councillor Purton confirmed that the HGGT has already got a mechanism for providing the infrastructure for the HGGT. Councillor Purton also confirmed that there is also an initial investment from the Government of £170 million (Housing Investment Grant) which will be used to fund the initial infrastructure. The Section 106 funds from the HGGT development will then replace the money spent from the Government. Councillor Charles noted that whilst the HGGT had agreed to split the costs of the feasibility study with the Council, this split had not yet been agreed. Councillor Charles asked Councillor Purton how the project with AECOM will be managed. Councillor Purton confirmed there will be an Infrastructure Development Vehicle which will consist of Members and Officers. Andrew Bramidge also confirmed that there will be an officer level management team across the HGGT partnership. Councillor Charles asked whether the Administration would agree to publish its full costings for the scheme. Councillor Purton confirmed that the information would be provided at workshops for consideration.

Councillor David Carter asked whether the HGGT had made any agreements for all or part of the HIG funding to be used for this scheme. Councillor Purton advised that the funding would only be made available once needed. Three schemes had already been identified for the HIG funding.

Councillor Davis asked Councillor Purton for clarification on work carried out so far with Hertfordshire County Council for a bus rapid transport system to link Hemel Hempstead with Harlow. Councillor Davis also requested clarification on the statement in the call in notice that “there was only an agreement on cost ‘in principle’” with the HGGT Board. Councillor Purton read out a statement from the HGGT Board meeting on 7 December 2020.

Councillor David Carter asked whether the HIG funding that has been allocated for the replacement of the two bridges would be lost if the works weren't completed by 2023. Councillor Purton confirmed that there were

three schemes included in the basis of the HIG funding. Andrew Bramidge advised the deadline for this fund is 2025.

Councillor Simon Carter asked when detailed planning for the feasibility study began as the project didn't appear on the Cabinet Forward Plan until December. Councillor Purton confirmed that the Metro proposal had been discussed for a long time. The Council has been working with a number of partners on the proposal and, therefore, was unable to solely decide when to proceed. Councillor Purton advised that all Members would have been aware of the project prior to it being brought to Cabinet in December. Councillor Simon Carter asked whether progress and financial update reports during the process would be brought back to Cabinet. Councillor Purton confirmed that Members could be involved in workshops which would provide progress updates. Councillor Simon Carter noted that it appeared that there would be no formal reporting back to Cabinet during the process. Councillor Simon Carter questioned why the HGGT is not carrying out the feasibility study. Councillor Purton confirmed that they are in partnership with the Council. Councillor Simon Carter asked how the quote for the feasibility study could be kept confidential when it is public funds being spent and the Council is not seeking alternative bids. Councillor Purton advised he would be happy to provide the quote privately. Councillor Simon Carter raised concerns that the final price of the project and funding for the project had not been considered. Councillor Purton advised the report at this stage was only about financing a feasibility study.

Councillor Davis proposed that no further action was taken in response to this call in.

It was noted that the meeting procedure allowed for debate prior to a vote being taken.

Councillors Charles noted that further information provided to the Sub Committee by Councillor Purton highlighted that the Cabinet had not received sufficient information to make an informed decision on 3 December 2020. Councillor Charles stated that there was still no indication on where funding for the feasibility study would come from. There was also no indication on the split of the costs between HDC and HGGT. Further, the Cabinet did not receive a copy of the report provided to AECOM for consideration. Councillor Charles urged the Sub Committee to refer the matter back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

Councillor Simon Carter noted that the discussions during the meeting and the report provided by Councillor Purton have revealed further relevant information since the Cabinet decision was taken in December 2020, therefore, suggested that the matter should be referred back to the Cabinet for reconsideration.

RESOLVED that the Sub Committee will take **no further action** in respect of this call in.

CHAIR OF THE SUB COMMITTEE