

TAMAR BRIDGE AND TORPOINT FERRY JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee held at Plymouth Council House, Armada Way, Plymouth, PL1 3AA on Friday 3 December 2021 Commencing at 10.00 am

Present:-

Cornwall Council Members

Martin Worth (Co-Chair)

Philip Desmonde, John Tivnan and Armand Toms

Plymouth City Council Members

Jonathan Drean (Co-Chair)

Mark Coker, Philip Partridge, Pat Patel and Bill Stevens

Apologies for (None)
absence:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Agenda No. 2)

TBTF/28 There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 OCTOBER 2021

(Agenda No. 3)

TBTF/29 It was moved by Councillor Worth, seconded by Councillor Tivnan, and

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee held on 1 October 2022 were correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(Agenda No. 4)

TBTF/30 There were no questions from the Public.

GENERAL MANAGER'S QUARTERLY REPORT

(Agenda No. 5)

TBTF/31 The Committee considered the General Manager's Quarterly Report (previously circulated), presented by the General Manager.

In response to comments and questions from Joint Committee Members, Officers advised that:-

1. In response to a comment about the knock-on impact of surfacing work (for example lost revenue and delays) it was advised that an exercise had not been undertaken in respect of any adverse effects. Traffic flow levels had been recorded, however these figures had been distorted by Covid. There were also records in respect of journey times but Officers had not got as far as assessing the pricing effect; although it was not believed that anything different could have been done to achieve the result needed. It was understood that there had been an impact in order to carry out this work. The General Manager advised that numbers could be looked at and figures could be brought back to the Committee in the next General Manager's report in respect of the estimated time lost, which would include a graph for visual reference;
2. It was acknowledged that figures could not be compared with those of 2020 due to the pandemic;
3. In respect of ferry chains it was noted that these had been changed recently and that an order had been put in for another set of chains for April 2022.

It was moved by Councillor Partridge, seconded by Councillor Drean, and

RESOLVED that:-

1. The report be noted;
2. An updated report be brought to the next meeting.

BUDGET MONITORING 2021/22

(Agenda No. 6)

TBTF/32 The Committee considered the Budget Monitoring 2021/22 report (previously circulated) by the Service Accountant.

In response to comments and questions from Joint Committee Members, Officers confirmed that:-

1. The figures applied to the capital summary showed the actual spend to date, the previous spend and the forecast for the overall scheme;
2. It was clarified that the report identified that there was a commitment to £44m worth of borrowing (and not £61.5m) and that the report addressed the current year's position;
3. In respect of the rocker pendle works it was noted that these were part of an approved programme but there had not been any spend against that project to date.

It was moved by Councillor Toms, seconded by Councillor Patel, and

RESOLVED that the revenue forecast and capital programme for 2021/22 be noted.

FUTURE FINANCING

(Agenda No. 8)

TBTF/33 The Committee considered the Future Financing report (previously circulated), presented by the General Manager.

It was advised that this report needed to be heard before the 2022-23 Revenue Estimates and Capital Programme (and Business Plan) Report as the decisions made for this report would affect the approval of the budgets.

The General Manager suggested that the March 2022 meeting of the Joint Committee be deferred for a couple of weeks (March 18th) in order to be able to give Officers enough time to compile the report on receipt of feedback from the public consultation.

During discussion, the following points were noted:-

1. In respect of income and spending, Officers were still currently looking at 90% traffic levels. It was noted that other crossings were looking at a range between 85% - 95%;
2. A Member commented that it was frustrating at how long it took to get things done due to legislative constraints, however he was encouraged by work that had been done to date;
3. The view was expressed that accurate figures in respect of the number of vehicles going from the east to west should be recorded so that it could be made clear about the importance of vehicles travelling in both directions. In response it was advised that there was no data specific to the bridge for westbound traffic, however some roadside technology would be installed in the next few months that would count westbound traffic;
4. A Member acknowledged that the bridge was on a major route into Cornwall and commented that Highways England needed to understand this, as they would like to see Highways England making some sort of contribution;
5. It was queried what would happen if the public were 100% against any increase. Concern was expressed that use of the bridge could become unviable for some people to work in east Cornwall. In response it was advised that although there was a need to increase costs, the commentary about the tag discounts etc. could be taken on board and it was added that the public consultation would be a good opportunity

to also inform the public about why increases were needed and what their money was spent on;

6. It was commented that there was a need to be mindful of the knock-on impact that any changes to the Tamar Bridge would have on minor roads and also to the communities of Plymouth and south east Cornwall;
7. The view was expressed that there was no choice but to increase the fees because the process was so lengthy. There were no other alternatives at this time;
8. It was commented that the increases were not fair on people that had to use the bridge to access education, work, healthcare etc. however there was a need to recognise that the bridge could not operate on a deficit;
9. It was noted that under the relevant legislation the undertaking could not operate with a budget deficiency, and it was important that the bridge did not deteriorate;
10. It was noted that the Act was written in the 1950's but that times had changed since then; particularly in respect of environmental changes. There was a need to look at other opportunities to increase revenue.

It was moved by Councillor Worth, seconded by Councillor Patel, and

RESOLVED that:-

1. The current financial position and the associated assumptions and uncertainties be noted;
2. A public consultation be undertaken in respect of the Joint Committee's preferred toll revision option in a format to be agreed by the Joint Chairs in consultation with Service Directors and the General Manager;
3. Officers bring further reports to the next meeting of the Joint Committee summarising the consultation feedback;
4. A budget of £60,000 for an external consultancy to undertake a review of the effectiveness, efficiency and governance of the undertaking be agreed, that will inform the forthcoming strategic plan;
5. A budget of £20,000 to fund a property assessment of land held by the undertaking be agreed;
6. Service Directors and General Manager to agree the brief and terms of reference for the external consultancy and property assessment, in consultation with the Joint Chairs and for Cornwall Council's Service Director to lead the procurement of these commissions in line with its contract procedure rules;
7. Officers bring reports to future meetings in relation to:

- Progress of the consultancy on effectiveness, efficiency and governance of the undertaking
 - Potential for increasing revenue sources other than tolls
 - Long term capital finance profiles and related future strategy
 - Progressing authority to index tolls and improve governance structure
8. That the meeting of the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee scheduled for 4 March 2022 be deferred to 18 March 2022

It was moved by Councillor Partridge, seconded by Councillor Tivnan, and

RESOLVED that it be Recommended to Council via the Cabinet of each Parent Authority:

1. The Joint Committee's preferred option for toll revision taken from the options in Section 2 of the report, that being uniform 30% increases on both TAG and cash tolls for all user classes be approved. Such approval to be subject to the Joint Committee making a decision whether or not to implement the preferred option following consideration of the public consultation responses. The Joint Committee being given the authority to make the implementation decision.

It was further moved by Councillor Tivnan, seconded by Councillor Drean, and

RESOLVED that it be noted that the Committee made the decision reluctantly for the reasons as set out in the minutes.

2022-2023 REVENUE ESTIMATES AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME (AND BUSINESS PLAN) REPORT

(Agenda No. 7)

TBTF/34 The Committee considered the 2022-23 Revenue Estimates and Capital Programme report (previously circulated), presented by the Service Accountant.

There were no comments or questions from the Committee.

It was moved by Councillor Partridge, seconded by Councillor Worth, and

RESOLVED that it be Recommended to Council via the Cabinet of each Parent Authority:

1. That the 2022/23 revenue estimates and capital programme and the draft 2022-23 Business Plan, as set out in the appendices to the report be approved, and
2. The longer term forecast to 2025/26 be noted.

Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry Joint Committee
3 December 2021

The meeting ended at 11.47 am

[The agenda and reports relating to the items referred to above are attached to the signed copy of the Minutes].