

# Minutes

## *TRANSPORT FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE TASK & FINISH GROUP*

**MINUTES OF THE TRANSPORT FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE TASK & FINISH GROUP HELD ON WEDNESDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2011, IN SWAN ROOM 1, JUDGES LODGINGS, AYLESBURY, COMMENCING AT 10.05 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 12.10 PM.**

### **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mr N Brown, Mr W Chapple OBE, Mr T Egleton and Mr C Jones

### **1 INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Michael Brand, Hedley Cadd and Brian Roberts. Bill Chapple OBE chaired the meeting.

A member expressed the view that all meetings of the Task and Finish Group should be held in public. The Chairman noted that this initial meeting was designed to brief members on the background to the Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) contract before the Task and Finish Group examined evidence in more detail in open public meetings. It was agreed that the papers discussed at the meeting and the minutes would be published.

### **2 TRANSPORT FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RINGWAY JACOBS CONTRACT (BACKGROUND & KEY FEATURES)**

The Chairman welcomed Sean Rooney, Compliance Manager, Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) to the meeting. Sean Rooney gave members a presentation on the Ringway Jacobs Contract. During the presentation and in response to members' subsequent questions, the following points were noted:

- The Ringway Jacobs (RJ) contract had resulted in quality improvements, reduction in costs and a huge step change in service delivery methods.
- In 2008-09, efficiencies with the previous contractor, Fitzpatrick had been exhausted and the Corporate Budget was being squeezed, so Transportation were expected to contribute major savings. Although Bucks had been a top performing Transport authority, the way the service was organised was not very efficient, with high overheads and duplication.
- Transport for Buckinghamshire (TfB) was created in April 2009. The Strategic Client Team structure is very lean, with six managers, but with strong governance arrangements it has proved to be a very effective way of managing the contract.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



- RJ have been able to bring private sector investment and innovation to Bucks.
- The contract with RJ makes significant links between their performance and profits. A member asked if it was possible to challenge the level of RJ's overheads. In response Sean Rooney explained that a fixed fee was included in the contract for overheads.
- A member asked if it would be possible to view the TfB contract. Sean Rooney expressed the view that whilst it would be reasonable to share the contract with members of the Task and Finish Group, it would not be able to be a public document due to commercial sensitivity. Sean Rooney assured members that the contract was a non-adversarial contract, which had been developed by Bevan Brittan, to encompass Buckinghamshire County Council's needs and aspirations.
- Members expressed the view that they would like to look at the contract because if the Task and Finish Group came across any issues, it would be useful to satisfy themselves that the contract was fit for purpose – thereby making it easier to assess if the underlying contract had led to problems or the operation of the contract.
- Sean Rooney highlighted a number of positive outcomes from the TfB contract. Significant savings had been delivered, including a 13% revenue saving in Year 1, with a minimum of 3% revenue savings to be achieved on a year on year basis. TfB represented a commercial sector approach, with significant investment and innovation from Ringway Jacobs and a one team ethos ensured that more could be delivered for less.
- The innovative web-based TfB service information centre has improved communications with Bucks residents and has won numerous awards.
- RJ offer TfB the ability to reach back into the parent companies to access specialist expertise and they are able to deliver savings through the bulk buying power of Eurovia.
- Sean Rooney also advised members that to date three or four audits had been conducted on TfB and it had been easy to access all necessary information.
- There had been a 25% reduction in tarmac costs under the TfB contract and any other efficiency savings were put forward annually to the Strategic Board for approval.
- A member commented that the contract had been described as a £40million contract initially, but if work could be completed for less now was the contract essentially making more money for RJ. Another member made the point that because the construction industry was depressed RJ could certainly secure raw materials for less. Installing tracking devices on machinery, as RJ had done, was also known to improve efficiency.
- Sean Rooney advised that the Leader had asked for more money to be put into resurfacing of roads and TfB had been able to accommodate this into the work programme.
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys would affect RJ's profits, as these were seen as a key performance indicator.
- Sean Rooney demonstrated the TfB Service Information Centre website to members. He explained that this would not have been possible without investment by RJ. Calls to the Contact Centre had dramatically reduced since the introduction of the website. As the public could now track the progress of road maintenance gangs and grass cutting operatives, this helped to manage public expectations. Members were impressed with the functionality of the website and said it was important to publicise this to the public and parish councils.

The Chairman thanked Sean Rooney for his presentation.

### **3 MERGER OF SERVICES WITHIN COMMUNITIES AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Sean Rooney provided members with an overview of the proposed merger of services within Communities and Built Environment. The proposed changes were out for consultation currently as a number of posts were at risk. The consultation was due to finish in December.

Currently the three services – Property, Planning and Environment and Transport – each have a Head of Service. Under the proposed changes the three services would be replaced by a Place Service, managed by one Divisional Director who would report directly into the Strategic Director. Beneath the Divisional Director there would be six Operations and Contracts Managers, who may have specialist areas of expertise, but would be expected to manage right across the new service.

The aim of the merger is to improve engagement with the Cabinet Members, introduce a more flexible management approach and produce savings, whilst providing quality and resilience as BCC continues to become a commissioning local authority. Specific job descriptions for the new service were being developed currently.

Members thanked Sean Rooney for his briefing.

#### **4 TRANSPORT FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AUDIT ASSIGNMENT**

The Chairman welcomed Ian Dyson, Chief Internal Auditor, to the meeting. Ian Dyson provided members with an overview of the initial findings of the recent audit of Transport for Buckinghamshire, which would be reported to the Regulatory and Audit Committee on 23 November 2011. The Chairman thanked Ian Dyson for attending the meeting.

#### **5 EVIDENCE SESSIONS**

Members discussed an outline of the forthcoming evidence gathering meetings of the Task and Finish Groups. Members agreed that they would need a minimum of four meetings and would like to keep an open mind as to whether further meetings might be needed. They were keen to hold all meetings in public and in the Mezzanine Rooms at County Hall.

It was agreed that Trevor Egleton would read through the copy of the TfB contract on behalf of the Task and Finish Group and report back on his findings at the next meeting.

#### **6 PROPOSAL OF SITE VISIT TO ANOTHER COUNTY COUNCIL**

Members discussed the possibility of visiting another County Council. It was generally felt that it might not be that useful, as Bucks was actually at the forefront of this kind of outsourcing arrangement. In addition, as the contract being scrutinised was already in place and could potentially be extended further, members questioned the benefit of looking at what other authorities were doing in this area.

It was agreed that Ben Cahill, Policy Officer would look into what other authorities were doing and if the experiences of other authorities who had outsourced might be useful, then the possibility of a visit or asking them to give evidence at one of the meetings could be investigated.

#### **7 PRESS AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

Members had a lengthy discussion about how best to involve the press and public in the review. A member asked if the review had been publicised to Parish Councils and Local Area Forums. Members wanted to highlight the review to the public and suggested doing a press release and possibly local radio interviews too.

The possibility of carrying out a survey of members of the public was discussed, perhaps using a sample from the Citizen's Panel or surveying people who had complained about TfB in the past. Members agreed that if a survey was used it was vital to be clear about the questions posed and important to give feedback and the final outcomes of the review to those who took part.

**8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011 at 10am in Mezzanine Room 3

**CHAIRMAN**