

SEStran Partnership Board Minutes

2pm, Friday 19 March 2021

Microsoft Teams

Present

Name

Organisation Title

Cllr Colin Davidson (In the Chair)	Fife Council
Cllr Gordon Edgar (Chair from item A8)	Scottish Borders Council
Laura Alexander	Non-Councillor Member
Cllr Donald Balsillie	Clackmannanshire Council
Cllr Dave Dempsey	Fife Council
Cllr Karen Doran	City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Ian Ferguson	Fife Council
Callum Hay	Non-Councillor Member
Simon Hindshaw	Non-Councillor Member
Cllr Chris Horne	West Lothian Council
Cllr Russell Imrie	Midlothian Council
Richard Llewellyn	Non-Councillor Member
Cllr Lesley Macinnes	City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Claire Miller	City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Laura Murtagh	Falkirk Council
Cllr Cameron Rose	City of Edinburgh Council
Cllr Peter Smail	Midlothian Council
Catherine Thomson	Non-Councillor Member
Barry Turner	Non-Councillor Member
Cllr Mike Watson	Clackmannanshire Council
Paul White	Non-Councillor Member

In Attendance

Hayley Barnett	City of Edinburgh Council
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Kevin Collins	Falkirk Council
Angela Chambers	SEStran
Andrew Ferguson	SEStran
Keith Fiskin	SEStran
Jim Grieve	SEStran
Ken Gourlay	Fife Council
Lindsay Haddow	Midlothian Council
Anna Herriman	SEStran
Beth Harley-Jepson	SEStran
Karen Jones	Azets
Graeme Johnstone	Scottish Borders Council
Graeme Malcolm	West Lothian Council
Martin Scott	City of Edinburgh Council
Ewan Tait	ScotRail
Iain Shaw	City of Edinburgh Council
Jim Stewart	SEStran
Julie Vinders	SEStran

Apologies for Absence

Peter Forsyth	East Lothian Council
Cllr Jim Fullarton	Scottish Borders Council
Vivienne Gray	Non-Councillor Member
Cllr Craig Hoy	East Lothian Council
Dr Doreen Steele	Non-Councillor Member

ScotRail Update – Presentation

Ewan Tait of ScotRail provided a presentation updating the Board on the ScotRail franchise, the impact of Covid-19, timetable changes and future plans.

In December 2019, Transport Scotland served a No Rebasing Notice and confirmed that the franchise would end on 31st March 2022. Since April 2020 ScotRail had been in Emergency Measures Agreements with Transport Scotland, and they were providing significant financial support to the rail industry to keep the trains running. The EMA2 ended on 31st March 2021. ScotRail and Transport Scotland were close to reaching an agreement for EMA3 which would last to September 2022. From 1st April 2022 the current ScotRail would end and Transport Scotland confirmed that the franchise would be operated by the Operator of Last Resort, a company wholly owned by the Scottish Government.

Details were provided of patronage since the start of 2020. It was noted that passenger numbers had dropped during the national lockdown and fluctuated as the restrictions were eased and reapplied. In terms of the types of tickets users were purchasing, initially the passenger number across all ticket types dropped but when lockdown restrictions were eased in the summer of 2020, leisure trips returned quicker than commuter travel.

Mr Tait noted that since February, ScotRail had been running reduced services across Scotland due to the reduction in demand. With the introduction of lockdown in December 2020, a decision was taken to reduce the level of services provided. Some services reinstated following stakeholder and customer feedback, including later services to Bathgate, Fife and Dundee, and additional daytime services to Dunbar.

Significant over-capacity in off-peak services in recent years meant that service levels were reviewed so that ScotRail could offer value for money to the Scottish Government whilst continuing to provide an attractive service and providing more capacity than they expect to need. There was a significant vacancy gap in the train crew complement. It had not been possible to conduct driver training over the previous 12 months; 165 drivers were waiting to go through training.

From May 2021, evening services would be restored across the network. There would be hourly service on the majority of routes in south east Scotland, with two trains per hour in the peaks. Edinburgh to Glasgow services would be two trains per hour all day. Edinburgh to Bathgate services would be two trains per hour all day with additional peak services Monday to Friday. Inter7City services would be every two hours as ScotRail focussed on local services.

Mr Tait noted that based on the 2020/21 budget, it was going to cost approximately £15 per journey to run a train service. Of that, £3.88 would come from the customer and £11.29 from the Scottish Government. Mr Tait stated that a successful decarbonised economy needs widespread use of public transport and questioned how more passengers could be carried without increasing operating costs. To do this, future timetables will be developed that meet future needs of passengers rather than simply reverting to the pre-COVID timetable.

Decision

To thank Ewan Tait for his attendance and note the presentation provided.

A1. Minutes

Decision

- 1) To agree the minute of the SEStran Partnership Board of 20 November 2020 as a correct record.
- 2) To agree the minute of the Performance and Audit Committee of 5 March 2021 as a correct record.

A2. External Audit Plan 2020/21

Azets, as the appointed independent external auditor of the Partnership, prepared an Annual Audit Plan for 2020/21. The plan detailed the audit approach based on an understanding of the characteristics, responsibilities and principal activities, risks and governance arrangements of the Partnership.

Decision

To note the External Audit Plan for 2019/20.

(References – SEStran Performance and Audit Committee, 5 March 2021 (item A5); report by the External Auditor, submitted)

A3(a). Revenue Budget 2021/22 and Indicative Financial Plan 2022/23 to 2023/24

The revenue budget for 2021/22 and an indicative financial plan for 2022/23 to 2023/24, was presented for approval.

Decision

- 1) To approve the proposed Core budget for 2021/22, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report.
- 2) To approve the proposed Projects budget for 2021/22, as detailed at Appendix 2(a) of the report.
- 3) To note that financial planning for 2022/23 to 2023/24 would be developed throughout 2021 for review by the Partnership in December 2021.
- 4) To agree the recommendation of the Performance and Audit Committee that, for future years financial planning, further consideration be given to the future resource requirement of the Partnership.
- 5) To note that the proposed budget was subject to a number of risks. All income and expenditure of the Partnership would continue to be monitored closely with updates reported to each Partnership meeting

(References – SEStran Performance and Audit Committee, 5 March 2021 (item A6); report by the Treasurer, submitted)

A3(b). Finance Officer's Report

The Board considered the second update on financial performance of the Core and Projects budgets of the Partnership for 2020/21, in accordance with the Financial Regulations of the Partnership. An analysis of financial performance to the end of January 2021 was also presented.

Decision

- 1) To note the forecast underspend on the Core revenue budget of £27,000.
- 2) To note that subject to confirmation of the final outturn for 2020/21 and after conclusion of the Annual Audit, it was anticipated the core budget underspend would be applied as a further contribution towards establishment of an unallocated General Fund reserve of £29,000.

- 3) To note the forecast underspend of £89,000 on the Projects budget which principally reflected slippage on development of the Regional Transport Strategy, due to the effects of the pandemic.
- 4) To note that subject to confirmation of the final outturn for 2020/21 and after conclusion of the Annual Audit, it was anticipated slippage on the Projects budget will be carried forward to 2021/22.

(Reference – report by the Treasurer, submitted)

A3(c). Annual Treasury Management Strategy

Details were provided of the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22.

Decision

To approve the Annual Treasury Management Strategy, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

(Reference – report by the Treasurer, submitted)

A4(a). Review of Governance Scheme

The Review of SEStran's Governance Scheme had taken place at regular intervals over recent years, specifically August 2017, June 2018, October 2018 and September 2019. Approval was sought of amendments to SEStran's Governance Scheme.

Decision

- 1) To repeal and approve the governance documents appended to the report to take effect from 20 March 2021.
- 2) To delegate approval to the Secretary to make any such amendments necessary to the Governance documentation to implement the decision of the Board.

(Reference – report by the Partnership Secretary, submitted)

A4(b). Non- Councillor Member Appointments

Approval was sought to extend the term of non-councillor board member, Doreen Steele to 31st March 2022, to align her term with that of the other non-councillor members.

Decision

- 1) To approve the extension of non-councillor board member, Doreen Steel's term to 31st March 2022.
- 2) To note that a reappointment/recruitment exercise for the 2022-2026 term of Non-Councillor Members would commence late 2021.

(Reference – report by the Partnership Secretary, submitted)

A5. Draft Business Plan 2021-22 to 2023-24

Approval was sought, in principle, of a proposed three-year Business Plan, subject to a finalised version being brought to the June cycle of Performance and Audit Committee and Board for further consideration.

The Business Plan followed in the main the format set out in last year's one-year Plan. However, in the projects section longer-term developments were set out where known; the three-year budget, again in draft form, was set out in the Annexes; and the impact of Covid on operational matters formed another Annex.

There was a wide-ranging discussion with comments on how the work could be progressed and a number of suggestions were put forward. The following key points emerged:

- There was a mixture of projects that had finite durations and end points and projects that did not have that, and this could be developed over time.
- The concept of rural transport issues should be strengthened in the Business Plan.
- There was an element of unknown as to what transport habits and working patterns would be like post Covid-19 pandemic.
- In the development of demand responsive transport, focus and attention could be given to think about how all sectors of the transport industry are facing challenges and it may be that there is scope for integration with the more traditional public transport system.
- There was a need for flexibility in the Business Plan.

Decision

- 1) To note the terms of the report.
- 2) To agree the initial draft Business Plan appended to the report, with a final version taking into account the budget outturn and other developments being brought back to the Performance and Audit Committee for further scrutiny and onward transmission to the Board in June.

(Reference – report by the Partnership Director, submitted)

A6. Equality Outcomes 2021-25 and Mainstreaming Report

The Board considered a report which advised that SEStran was a listed public body under the Equality Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. The draft Equalities Outcomes 2021-2025 and Mainstreaming report was presented for approval and publication by 30 April 2021.

Decision

- 1) To approve the Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 and Mainstreaming Report.
- 2) The note that further review with the Equalities and Access to Healthcare Forum would be undertaken to finalise the report ahead of the deadline for publication of 30 April 2021.

(Reference – report by the Business Manager, submitted)

A7. Projects Performance Report

Information was provided on the current status and progress of the various projects SEStran was involved in. The update set out where effects of Covid-19 restrictions had an impact on delivery timescales.

Decision

- 1) To note arrangements in place under the Withdrawal Agreement for SEStran's continued involvement in existing European Projects.
- 2) To note progress made on current projects outlined in Appendix 1 of the report, where impacts or delays had been recorded in relation to Covid-19.
- 3) To note progress in supporting new Bus Service Improvement Partnerships and their bids to the Bus Partnership Fund, outlined in Appendix 1 of the report, section 3.5, and agree SEStran's formal support of the emerging bids and partnership structures, subject to regular progress reports to the Board.
- 4) To note progress in exploring potential new areas of project work around Mobility as a Service (MaaS) and Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), outlined in Appendix 1, section 5.4, and delegate to the Partnership Director the creation of collaboration arrangements with relevant partners to further progress this area, subject to successful award of funding and regular progress reports.

(Reference - report by the Senior Partnership Manager, submitted)

A8. New Regional Transport Strategy: Update Report

An update was provided on the ongoing progress of the work to deliver the new Regional Transport Strategy. An update was also provided on the status of the Second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) 2 being undertaken by Transport Scotland

Decision

- 1) To note the continuing progress to deliver a new Regional Transport Strategy SEStran 2035.
- 2) To note that a number of consultations were underway for STPR2 and that the deadline for comments is 31 March 2021.
- 3) To agree that submission of the final response on the STPR2 consultations was delegated to the Partnership Director, in consultation with the Chair, subject to including any further recommendations incorporating the views of the Board from the meeting.

(Reference – report by the Strategy and Projects Officer, submitted)

A9. Date of Next Meeting

Decision

To note that the next meeting would be held on Friday 18 June 2021 at 10am.

B1. Consultation Responses

B1.1 Road Safety Framework

Details were provided of SEStran's response submitted to Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 Draft Public Consultation.

Decision

To note the terms of the consultation response.

B1.2 Union Connectivity

Details were provided of SEStran's response to the Union Connectivity Review.

Decision

To note the terms of the consultation response.

B1.3 Standards Commission Model Code

Details were provided of SEStran's response to the consultation on the Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies.

Decision

To note the terms of the consultation response.

B1.4 M8 and M9 Trunk Roads (Newbridge to Hermiston Gait) (Actively Managed Hard Shoulder and Speed Limit) Regulations

Details were provided of SEStran's response submitted to the Consultation on the M8 and M9 Trunk Roads (Newbridge to Hermiston Gait) (Actively Managed Hard Shoulder and Speed Limit) Regulations.

Decision

To note the terms of the consultation response.

B1.5 Placed Based Economic Development Zones

Details were provided of SEStran's response submitted to Scotland's Economic Performance - The contribution of place-based economic development zones consultation.

Decision

To note the terms of the consultation response.

B2. Minutes

Decision

To note the minute of the Chief Officers Liaison Group Meeting of 17 February 2021.