

Strategic Rail Member Reference Group – Terms of Reference

Purpose

This Group was initially established as part of the Council's preparations for petitioning against the HS2 Phase 2b Hybrid Bill in accordance with the proposed approach to member engagement as referenced in the Council resolution of 24th February 2022.

Following the cancellation of HS2, north of Birmingham in October 2023, Government announced its intention to accelerate the delivery of the section of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) between Liverpool and Manchester – the Liverpool to Manchester Railway, of which, several kilometres of the route is proposed to pass through the Borough. In January 2024, Government announced that it intended to utilise the HS2 Phase 2b hybrid bill to seek the consents to deliver the eastern section of the railway, between Millington and Manchester Piccadilly. As such, the Phase 2b hybrid bill was read into the 2024/25 Parliament in the Kings Speech in July 2024.

In addition, following HS2 north's cancellation, the mayors of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands brought together a private sector consortium to look at alternative options for improving rail connectivity between the West Midlands and Manchester. In September 2024, the consortium published this review which proposed a new rail link between Handsacre Junction, where HS2 Phase 1 ends, and High Legh, where the proposed Liverpool to Manchester Railway would connect with the new rail link. It is proposed that the route would follow the alignment of HS2 phases 2a and 2b, much of which would pass through Cheshire East, with the recommended solution passing through a tunnel under Crewe and not through Crewe station.

Given the current and forecast activity around future rail plans for the North and Midlands, of which many would directly impact Cheshire East, a repurposed Member Reference Group is required to provide the necessary steer to officers in responding to the emerging and possible opportunities, challenges and risks for the borough from these proposed investments.

Members

- Cllr Nick Mannion (Chair) – Leader of the Council
- Cllr Michael Gorman (Deputy Chair) – Deputy Leader of the Council
- Cllr Mark Goldsmith – Chair of Highways and Transport Committee
- Cllr Laura Crane – Deputy Chair of Highways and Transport Committee
- Cllr Janet Clowes – Leader of the Conservative Group
- Cllr Hannah Moss – Cheshire East Rail Champion
- Cllr Alan Coiley - Cheshire East Rail Champion

Roles and responsibilities

- Provide a steer to officers on the priority issues, opportunities and risks relating to emerging rail plans, policies and projects.
- Provide feedback and endorsement of any Council response to such proposals.
- Supporting officers in seeking to influence and challenge proposals and plans for the betterment of the Borough.
- Receive feedback on the issues raised by local ward members and key stakeholders to gain a full understanding and appreciation of local issues, which could be incorporated into the Council's petition where a position is agreed
- Hear feedback on the areas where the Council is working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities, central government and stakeholders on shared issues

Key Principles for members of the Group

- Work as an advisory body for the Council
- Have no formal delegated decision making authority from the Council
- Attend on a voluntary basis and receive no remuneration
- Be expected to maintain the confidentiality and integrity of any confidential information that they may receive that is not publicly available

Periodicity

Frequency as required

Support

Meetings will be chaired by the Head of Rail and Transport Integration and other attendees will include officers from across the Place Directorate and other technical officers by exception, where the agenda dictates. Meetings will be confidential to maintain the commercial sensitivity and position of the Council.

Meetings

The primary purpose of the first meeting will be to introduce the Cheshire East officers to the Member Reference group, agree the purpose of the meetings and explain the petitioning process.

The group may need to meet on a more regular basis where there is key activity or deliverables.

Substitutes will be subject to the approval of the Chair prior to the meeting.

The Secretariat for the Board will be provided by Cheshire East Council Officers, preparing agendas and supporting papers.

Meetings will either be held by Teams or a Council venue will be provided for face to face meetings.