

Minutes of A660 Joint Council Monday 8th September 2014 7.30pm at HEART

Attendance

Present : BM, EP, MO, MS, SB, HP, MT, CR, DF, JF, JS, JR, IS, MM, CH, GR, RR, SS, NS, CF, LN, CP, DW

Apologies : TB, TS

Agreement of minutes

Minutes accepted as an accurate record of the 11th August meeting.

Matters arising

SB The Whitfields protest went well. EP I couldn't attend the Whitfields gathering but saw Hilary Benn on Saturday and he said he's supporting us on the Whitfields and will write to NGT about it.

Treasurer's Report

This was deferred to the next meeting.

Collection

The collection was taken at this point and amounted to £100.

Inquiry update

NS said he'd been to the inquiry on most days. Last week three objectors gave evidence. Stephen Speak, the Deputy Chief Planning Officer, continued to be cross-examined. He was followed by Chris Cheek of TAS Partnership, transport consultants, an expert witness for First West Yorkshire. He was followed by Paul Turner, the commercial director at First West Yorkshire. Stephen Speak said he made decisions on the whole scheme. He was asked what criteria he used when making decisions. He said the problem with planning is that there are no criteria, it's all a matter of judgement. It's about weighing benefits and on balance he'd approved the scheme. He agreed he'd relied a lot on others' evidence. He said balance was provided by other witnesses. He agreed the planning decisions could be adversely affected by heritage matters. He agreed if there'd been evidence of harm it would have affected his decision. He agreed the scheme didn't integrate with, and would adversely affect other bus services. The minutes of the NGT Project Board meetings suggest that the Board wasn't happy with the scheme and weren't happy with the stop spacing and there was discussion about the type of vehicle. They can't run more than 10 buses an hour or it would affect signalling. This is why they want to plump for a vehicle that carries loads of

people. One of the stated preferences of bus users is that they get a seat. They have to provide disabled access but no vehicle has been chosen yet. A preference survey shows that the people of Leeds don't favour trolleybuses. Stephen Speak was asked whether the NGT Project Board had been made aware of the preference survey. He said he couldn't recall it being mentioned. He was asked if the NGT Project Board had been told that the scheme would lead to an increase in the number of kilometres travelled by car. According to modelling, there's a decrease in trips but an increase in miles covered. He was asked if the NGT Project Board know that congestion wouldn't decrease. He didn't know this either. CR At one point he said if we don't get NGT, congestion will get worse. NS The inspector asked about the effect on receptors on Monument Moor and the effect on people who live there and walk. He asked Stephen Speak if he knew that the Dales Way starts there and he replied that he didn't. Then it was the turn of Mr Cheek and Mr Turner. Mr Cheek, the director of TAS described how London Transport works, which uses Routemasters and how electronic ticketing works and how they use predominantly double decker buses and that the Leeds survey shows people prefer double decker buses. There was discussion about hybrids and how they've proved advantageous. He said there are no right hand drive trolleybuses in the world except Japan. It's clear from the NGT Project Board minutes that the reason they chose the trolleybus is that it gives them legal control over the system because it has to be approved by a Transport and Works Act Order. The point was made that this shouldn't be the reason for designing a transport system. It should be the best system for the people of Leeds and not to gain legal control. He said the promoters' aims could be achieved by working with the bus companies. When Mr Cameron cross-examined Mr Cheek, he tried to denigrate First West Yorkshire. He said they make a lot of profit and a lot of promises but Mr Cameron couldn't make any progress. CR Mr Cameron was getting into fine details, very minor stuff. He was trying to drive a wedge between First Bus and the objectors. NS NGT keeps saying they've already got approval from DfT but a document from DfT to NGT says it's only very provisional. NGT would have to meet a large number of conditions for final approval. Mr Cheek ended by saying NGT does not have the ingredients of success and its aims could be achieved quicker by other methods. Paul Turner described how if Metro cooperated with FWY they could achieve their aims quicker and cheaper. He spoke of how they plan to introduce smart card ticketing. He mentioned how London runs its system. There were questions about how express services such as the X84 would be affected and the effect on ordinary bus services if NGT is implemented, how there'd be a worse bus service in the area and in the areas around the route. There was discussion about electric buses in York, Milton Keynes and Geneva. CF Mr Cheek spoke of the difficulty of doing extensions which would require a TWAO and an inquiry whereas with a bus you need just 56 days notice. CR And he spoke of the risky speculative nature of the whole project. Mr Cheek said the whole scheme is based on a flawed SP test. He said, "Words fail me." NS Mr Turner described how "New Bus for Leeds" would work. They'd invest £97 million in fleet of Routemaster type buses. They hope to implement the scheme in 2016 and without infrastructure improvements. But they hope there would be infrastructure improvements with improved bus lanes a priority. They'd have 3 doors. CF The inspector asked Mr Speak about park and rides in Leeds. He

replied that he didn't know and then said there's one on King Lane. The inspector asked if they're successful. There are occupancy rates for the one at King Lane. HP He's cycled there and seen it's empty. NS There's a refusal by NGT to put forward political members. The point has been made in cross-examination that LCC members don't seem to be aware of the details of the scheme and that councillors' knowledge of the scheme is sadly lacking. They can't be forced to attend the inquiry. There was a request that the inspector force a politician to appear but the inspector declined.

MO There are no signs on the ring road that there's a park and ride. HP PB has found that their figures require people inside a radius with Bodington at the centre, to drive north to the park and ride. 7 people per square metre is more than on the London Underground (laughter). PB has calculated it's more than the permitted number of people in the inquiry building's lifts. MO What is the London Underground density? HP I think it's 3.5. CF That would make a good demonstration point. LN Should we do what the Japanese do and squeeze people in? MB Crossrail is going to have seats.

LN Extensions would have to be paid for by Leeds taxpayers. CF I can't see an extension unless this scheme is a success.

Any other business

CR asked for help recording the inquiry. CF said he could do one day. SS said that she and NS could help too.

CF We've not completed the exercise we started weeks ago. It got put aside. We said we'd not duplicate the evidence we give to the inspector. I think we should carry on with that exercise. This thing could go on and on and we don't want to be responsible for prolonging it. The working group that met at my house in April/May made good progress. A lot of points have crystallised now. Perhaps the A660 JC should put forward maybe just three witnesses. We need to distil what we say so it's high quality,

GG Has anyone got evidence it will go over budget? Everything can be costed except for excavation. It went belly-up in Manchester due to unforeseen excavation costs. I estimated the cost based on 14km of cabling but now they're saying it'll be several times this amount of cabling, so I reckon the overall cost will be at least £500 million. This is a bottomless pit. If you want a house, you go to an architect, not a builder. The architect tells the builder the cost of the bricks and then you get bids in. But with this project, they just don't know. We don't know how much digging up so many miles of road will cost. We don't know where all the sub-stations are going to be. CF said GG has told him about the huge cost of manual digging. You can't use a digger to expose electrical cables. GG They refused to have an electrical witness. I'll call in tomorrow and ask about the cost of disruption. Every time they lay cable, they'll have to switch off entire streets. CF If we can establish that there is a realistic prospect it will go way over budget it would give Labour councillors a face-saving way out. MB George Osbourne

could withdraw money at any time. CF I think the Executive Board has been poorly briefed.

HP I've spoken to Caroline who's agreed to do questions for us for when we cross examine on the amended heritage report. CF If you don't cross examine on a point, you're deemed to have accepted it. DCJ Should we contribute to the cost? HP I'd be happy to accept. CF Are people happy to contribute? Caroline's work is high quality. Everyone. Yes.

CR On the 17th July recording I heard Mr Whitehead roast Thomas Walker over the lack of consultation particularly regarding St Columba's. LN has now told me that NGT approached the church's temporary moderator and persuaded him there would be minimal disruption. The temporary moderator explained this to the congregation after the service and they decided to withdraw their objection. This is the most catastrophically stupid thing anyone has ever done. St Columba's is one of the best arrows in our array. I think if you've withdrawn an objection, you need to be allowed to re-submit it. MT In the United Reformed Church you're not working with the congregation. I shall write to Kevin Wilson, the Yorkshire moderator. I've not heard from Sheila Duncan. CF St Columba's is used by a lot of other people. So the receptors aren't just the congregation but lots of other groups e.g. choirs and yoga group. IS Donald Hood is a member of the church. HP Members of the church should speak at the inquiry and comment on what has happened in the church.

DCJ A BBC journalist asked why the inquiry is over-running and was told it's because the inspector is inexperienced and has miscalculated the time the inquiry would take. I said I thought it was because of the level of detail. MB At the pre-inquiry meeting, the inspector said the inquiry would take as long as it takes.

DF Introduced her neighbour Jackie, the first resident on the Whitfields. DF said a resident sent an email to the local councillors and Hilary Benn but only heard back from Liz Nash who said Hunslet Road is at a standstill in the morning. DF videoed it at 8.10am and it was still flowing. The John Smeaton flyover took away a lot of the traffic. Councillor Nash wants to wash her hands of the affair and doesn't want to speak about it. She says she got us the offer of walls and parking spaces. She says she reluctantly chose this route because she said there are chest problems in this area and she said she doesn't want to speak on this matter any further. CR I'd be happy to publish this on my blog. DF It was a well put-together email that the resident sent to Councillor Nash. CF Liz Nash said in an email she doesn't want to discuss it any further? DF Yes. CF There should be a press release about this. DF We've 700 signatures on the petition now. CF When are you going to present the petition? DF Should I present it to the inspector with the statement? CF Better to present it sooner and do a presentation about the petition and that Councillor Nash doesn't want any further discussion. DF There's subsidence at the Garden Gate pub. I'm fighting for the pub as well. I've contacted English Heritage. HP If you give me the info, I'll put it in our heritage report. BM said about owners of Garden Gate pub supporting the scheme. DF We got compulsory purchase orders in April 2010 and we didn't know if we'd have a home. Now they have ones for our gardens but they don't say how much they

need so we're still worried for our homes. DCJ Are there any Facebook experts who can give Jeff advice? DW I can.

SB It's Headingley Farmers' Market this Saturday. Can anyone distribute leaflets? CF I can.

CF You may have seen yellow badges saying "no." We had 75 made with a view to everyone turning up one morning of the inquiry without saying anything in advance to make clear to the inspector none of the communities along the route want this. DCJ Shall we pick a day now? DW Should we do it near the end? DCJ The journalist I spoke to was interested in attending on day there'll be lots of objectors.

CR I think it's important for anyone who represents a group that you say, "We do not consent to this." i.e. "The A660 Joint Council which represents all groups does not consent to NGT."

CP Did you say Hilary Benn isn't interested? EP He said on Saturday that he'll write about the Whitfields. CF The rule is when an MP gets more than a dozen letters on a subject, that they take an interest. CH Can more in his constituency write to him?

Action Points

MT to write to Kevin Wilson, the Yorkshire moderator of the United Reformed Church about St Columba's. DW to give JF advice on setting up a Facebook group. CF to arrange a meeting of the group that ensures evidence isn't duplicated. Constituents of Hilary Benn to write to him about the scheme. CF to distribute leaflets at Headingley Farmers' Market. CF, NS and SS to help CR with recordings.

Next meeting

AGM. Monday 20th October at 7.00pm