

# **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

## **Executive – 16 March 2022**

### **Wellington and Cullompton Railway Station Project – Approval of Revised Project Governance Arrangements**

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mike Rigby**

**Report Author: Sarah Povall, Principal Planning Policy Officer**

#### **1 Executive Summary/Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the project governance arrangements for the next phase of the Wellington and Cullompton Railway Station Project, for which the end product will be a Final Business Case (FBC). This will establish clear lines of decision-making and reporting for the project going forward following the agreement with the Department for Transport that Network Rail will be leading on the project from this point onwards.
- 1.2 The current Steering Group will be seeking endorsement of the arrangements from the Devon and Somerset Metro Group, which has the role of Project Board for this project, and formal sign-off from the promoters Somerset West and Taunton Council (through Executive Committee) and Mid Devon District Council (through Cabinet).

#### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Executive resolves to endorse the governance arrangements set out in Appendix A.

#### **3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)**

- 3.1 Robust, suitable and appropriate governance arrangements for the new stations project are necessary to drive the project progress, allow it to operate efficiently and to build relationships with stakeholders. Effective governance arrangements will also ensure that best use is made of funding opportunities. The governance arrangements provide a structure within which the project will develop and be accountable.
- 3.2 Risks will be owned by Network Rail, as project sponsor, from this point forwards and constantly reviewed as the project develops.

## **4 Background and Full details of the Report**

- 4.1 The intention of the project is to restore rail access to Wellington and Cullompton. It is considered that this can be part of a more general enhancement to the rail service between Bristol and Exeter. A key driver for delivering these projects is that both areas are subject to major housing expansion and regeneration activity, along with being proximate to other significant planned growth.
- 4.2 The vision for Wellington in the Adopted Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011-2028 sets out the potential to reopen Wellington Station later in the Core Strategy period, bringing wider sustainability benefits and representing the aspiration of the community.
- 4.3 A number of studies have been undertaken so far, to support the development of the project. These include:
- Network Strategy and Capacity Planning: Capability and Capacity Analysis. Devon Metro Phase 2 Cullompton and Wellington Report (Network Rail, April 2017);
  - The Cullompton and Wellington Initial Station Assessment (WSP, January 2019);
  - Cullompton Wellington Rail Stations Appraisal (Devon County Council, 2014);
  - Cullompton Wellington Rail Stations Appraisal Summary (Devon County Council, 2017); and
  - Strategic Outline Business Case (WSP, 2021)
- 4.4 This project was successful in Ideas Fund Round 1 and submitted its SOBC in January 2021 which has subsequently been approved.
- 4.5 The SOBC produced by the two proposers (Mid Devon and Somerset West & Taunton Councils) with support from Network Rail, Department for Transport and Great Western Railway sets out the case for the opening of new stations at the growing towns of Wellington and Cullompton in Somerset and Devon respectively.
- 4.6 This SOBC is aligned with the best practice guidance for a Strategic Outline Business Case as described in “The Transport Business Cases” (DfT, January 2013). The SOBC has examined non-rail options including highway investment and improved bus services, and concluded that, in view of existing highway congestion and its impact on road journey times, a rail solution is the most effective way of connecting communities and supporting growth. The SOBC confirms that re-opening the two railway stations has a strong value for money case.
- 4.7 Following the funding announcement in the autumn budget statement in October 2021, the Steering Group have been working closely with Network Rail and the Department for Transport (DfT) to finalise next steps in relation to the new stations at Wellington and Cullompton.

- 4.8 The £5 million of funding announced will enable the project to advance significantly through the next two stages of project development and design, following the submission of the Strategic Outline Business Case at the beginning of 2021. The £5m will be administered by Network Rail as part of the Restoring Your Railway, Rail Network Enhancements budget with specific outputs and milestones agreed between DfT and Network Rail.
- 4.9 The promoters, Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and Mid Devon District Council (MDDC), have agreed with DfT that Network Rail will lead on the project from this point onwards, with support from their alliance partner Great Western Railway. It is felt that this will bring significant benefits to the project.
- 4.10 Network Rail has committed to working collaboratively with the promoters to ensure wider land-use, access, masterplanning and community issues can be looked at holistically. The following set of revised governance arrangements aims to reflect this and the change in project lead.
- 4.11 The proposed governance structure is set up to oversee the development of the Final Business Case (FBC) and complete PACE 1, 2 and some elements of PACE enabling deliverables. PACE refers to Network Rail's rail investment framework, "Project Acceleration in a Controlled Environment".
- 4.12 The governance structure will be reviewed with all parties on commencement of the Construction stage.
- 4.13 The proposed governance structure seeks to continue some aspects of the current arrangements, but importantly it also looks to adapt to Network Rail's new role in leading the project from this moment forward. This proposal is considered to provide an appropriate basis for robust decision-making and project co-ordination to take the project through the next stages of its development. These governance arrangements are consistent with established project management good practice.
- 4.14 The various elements are explained in Appendix A.

## **5 Links to Corporate Strategy**

- 5.1 "Theme 1: Our Environment and Economy" of the Corporate Strategy sets out the objective to, "encourage wealth creation and economic growth throughout the District by attracting inward investment, enabling research and innovation, improving the skills of the local workforce and seeking to ensure the provision of adequate and affordable employment land to meet different business needs."
- 5.2 The purpose of this project is to encourage wealth creation and economic activity through improved connectivity.
- 5.3 "Theme 3: Homes and Communities" of the Corporate Strategy sets out the objective to, "offer a choice of good quality homes for our residents, whatever their age and income, in communities where support is available for those who

need it.”

- 5.4 The aim of this project is to improve connectivity and access to services, facilities and jobs.

## **6 Finance/Resource Implications**

- 6.1 Funding for developing the project from this point onwards is being received by Network Rail from DfT, from the Restoring Your Railways Fund.
- 6.2 Ongoing participation in the Working Group, Steering Group and Senior Stakeholders Group will be met through existing budgets.

## **7 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 No legal implications are associated with the proposed governance structure.

## **8 Climate and Sustainability Implications**

- 8.1 The development aims to have a positive impact on promoting active travel and reducing traffic and associated across the District.

## **9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications**

- 9.1 None identified.

## **10 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 10.1 No equality and diversity issues are identified for this report at this stage. As the project goes forward it will need to consider the views from representatives from protected groups that the project has the potential to impact upon.

## **11 Social Value Implications**

- 11.1 This project is intended to have a high social value, by promoting the connectivity between places in an environmentally conscious way.

## **12 Partnership Implications**

- 12.1 The governance arrangements in Appendix A set these out in greater detail.

## **13 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 13.1 None identified.

## **14 Asset Management Implications**

- 14.1 A new station in Wellington will encourage a modal shift and as a consequence of reducing the number of vehicles on the road, will also help to improve air quality.

## 15 Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s)

15.1 None identified.

### Democratic Path:

- Scrutiny/Audit and Governance Committee – No
- Executive – 16 March 2022
- Full Council – No

Reporting Frequency: Once only

List of Appendices (background papers to the report) (delete if not applicable)

Appendix A	Draft Project Governance Arrangements
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### Contact Officers

Name	Sarah Povall
Direct Dial	01823 219733
Email	s.povall@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk