

PTE/18/29

Devon and Exeter Rail Project Working Party
13 July 2018

Devon and Exeter Rail Project Working Party – Future arrangements

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation: It is recommended the Devon and Exeter Rail Project Working Party consider:

- (a) the future purpose of the Working Party; and
- (b) the future management of the group, including options outside of the DCC committee structure.

1. Summary

This report considers the future options for the Working Party following on from the discussion at the previous meeting held on 19 January 2018.

2. Background/Introduction

The current Working Party developed from the Exe Rail project a number of years ago. Currently it meets twice a year but there has been a desire to increase this. However, following the departure of Andrew Ardley in February 2018, Devon County Council no longer has a dedicated rail officer and there is no capacity to provide more support. The work is now spread amongst a number of officers across Planning, Transportation and Environment (PT&E).

3. Proposal

Purpose of the Group

The role of the Working Party is to investigate and/or make recommendations on rail services in the Exeter and hinterland area, including proposals for service levels, promotion and publicity and infrastructure improvements. Recent meetings have followed a format of reports from the main rail operating companies, Network Rail and the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership with updates from the Head of PT&E where appropriate. This format needs to be reviewed with focus on relevant issues.

There are other rail related meetings across the County, mostly in relation to individual line issues. A Countywide perspective remains important, and any future focus of the Working Party should complement, rather than duplicate other meetings.

Future Management of the Group

Holding the meetings within the current Committee framework can be restrictive in terms of the timing of the meetings and who can contribute. There is also no officer capacity or funding to increase the frequency of the meetings. When major issues in relation to railways take place whether this group contributes is dependent on the timing of the meeting. So, for

example, the Cross Country franchise is timely with today's Working Party but others have not been.

Members are asked to consider the following options:

1. Continue with the current two Committee Meetings per year in the existing format;
2. Develop this meeting into a forum working with the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership. This would potentially allow the number of meetings to increase and give greater flexibility on agenda items.

Should there be a change in format it remains important that relevant rail related matters still need to be considered within the County Council at the appropriate level and by the relevant committee, including Cabinet, as now.

Any future working relationship with the Rail Partnership would still need to have adequate representation and it would be treated as an outside body with DCC representatives appointed every four years in line with election cycles.

Whichever option is decided the County Council will continue to provide accommodation for meetings.

4. Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

Officers have discussed the options set out above with the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder and Chairman of the Working Party.

5. Financial Considerations

As a legacy from Exe Rail there are small annual amounts of funding from some District Councils and it is suggested, subject to approval by each Council, that this is channelled to the Rail Partnership.

6. Environmental Impact Considerations

The County Council will continue to promote and develop rail-based solutions as a sustainable alternative, alongside other forms of public transport.

7. Equality Considerations

None.

8. Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations.

9. Risk Management Considerations

No risks have been identified.

10. Public Health Impact

There are no anticipated public health impacts.

11. Options/Alternatives

Options are set out Section 3 above.

12. Reason for Recommendation/Conclusion

In order to harness the enthusiasm of this group and continue to work closely with rail partners it is felt that changing the format and structure of these meetings are the best way forward.

Dave Black
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for enquiries: Damien Jones

Room No. Transport Coordination Service, Matford Offices, County Hall

Tel No: 01392 383000

Background Paper	Date	File Ref.
------------------	------	-----------

None		
------	--	--

dj290618der
sc/cr/Devon and Exeter Rail Project Working Party Future arrangements
02 050718