

West of England Joint Committee – 14 June 2019

Comments from the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR – WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE, 14 JUNE 2019

Arising from our meeting held on 12 June 2019, I wish to raise the following matters on behalf of the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

1. Declaration of Climate Emergency:

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee note that two of the Combined Authority's three constituent councils (Bristol and Bath & North East Somerset) have declared a Climate Emergency and set carbon emissions targets. North Somerset Council, who participate in the West of England Joint Committee, has also done so and it is understood that South Gloucestershire will be debating this matter soon.

We are strongly of the view that it is essential that the West of England Combined Authority demonstrates leadership in the region in relation to climate control and that, as soon as possible, the Combined Authority (through the West of England Combined Authority Committee) should itself declare a Climate Emergency.

It was also noted that in the Annual Report 2018/19, there is only limited mention of carbon related issues (the SW Energy Hub and the Low Carbon Challenge with a combined budget of £8m) and it was felt that WECA should be reaffirming publicly the good work that is being done in this area by the organisation. Finally on this issue, Climate Change is not mentioned as a risk factor on the Corporate Risk Register when clearly it should be.

2. Constitutional Changes (agenda item 11):

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee generally welcome the proposed constitutional changes, including the revised governance arrangements and the establishment of four Boards (covering Transport, Planning & Housing, Business and Skills) to replace the three former advisory boards. It was felt that this empowered these boards to carry out their vital tasks.

The committee is, however, concerned about one aspect of the rules governing public participation at Combined Authority and Joint Committee meetings. In relation to questions, whilst it is welcome that every effort will be made to provide replies to questioners in advance of committee meetings, we strongly feel, in the interests of transparency, openness and local democracy, that questioners should also be permitted to ask an oral supplementary question(s) at the meeting itself.

I request that these comments are also submitted to the West of England Joint Committee on 14 June 2019 for their information.

Cllr. Stephen Clarke
Chair, West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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