

PLEASE FIND ATTACHED STATEMENTS, QUESTIONS AND REPLIES SUBMITTED TO THIS MEETING

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Agenda Item 4

WECA Audit Committee – 17 July 2020

Statement 1 – Dave Redgewell

Dear councillors,

We are concerned about the following :-

How much money has been spent by the WECA mayoral transport authority function on the covid 19 bus recovery programme.

What money has been paid to bus operators in the West of England Combined Authority area ?

On covid 19 bus grant CBSSG from 17th March 2020. How has the £1.148 million been spent.

What money has been spent of the £736 allocation for 2021 of the £30 million pounds budget.

What money has been spent on service level recovery between the following dates - 17th March 2020 & s1st June 2020 ?

In agreeing 50% service levels.

up to 15th June 2020 and on the 4th July 2020 an 80% service increase with money being allocated by the Department for Transport and agreed with First Group and other bus operators. For service between 7am and 7pm Monday to Fridays how much of the concessionary travel money has been allocated ?

Transport levy for supported services. Ie tendered bus services how much community transport money has been spent ?

In line with government guidance what public consultation took place as to the awarding of this money on service for essential journeys on the public transport network for shopping, chemists and medical centres/Hospitals during this period to understand the value for money aspects.

Why were there no community consultations on Zoom with rail and bus passenger groups

in-line with covid 19 regulations from the Department for Transport and Transport Focus. Money was allocated to provide emergency services, provision on by using community transport vehicles.

Were any savings made on this year's budget by not operating services ?

What savings were made and money relocated with the withdrawing of subsidy on many tendered services run by HCT group of London

especially as this resulted in service's being withdrawn from South Bristol hospital 515 service, no bus services to the Chew Valley for essential journeys on service 672 from Bristol to the Chew Valley funded jointly with North Somerset Council.

The complete withdrawal of service 35 from Bristol to Marshfield leaving the community with public transport. A situation that still exists today.

What consultation took place with the passengers affected by these decisions and also with parish/town council's and local councillors regarding the service cuts.

Were Stagecoach West paid full tendered costs as they provide all their tenders service during the covid 19 period.

With further covid 19 grant payments of CBSSG to bus operators in August what consultation will take place with stakeholders, the Scrutiny Commission and the Audit Commission.

To understand values for money and provision of weekend and evening services as per the Secretary of State guidance on opening up of the public houses, restaurants and hotels.

With bus capacity being increased from 11 people on a single decker going up to 18 passengers and from 20 to 35 passengers on a double decker.

We understand is it correct that the bus recovery plan payment are signed off by the chief executive and the mayor.

We have no real-time information system working in bus stations in Bath Spa, Bristol, Yate, Cribbs Causeway bus station, UWE bus station, no information at bus stops or railway stations at Bristol Parkway or Bristol Temple Meads.

When will a recovery plan be in place for passenger information and what money has been spent of the transport levy ?

What money has been saved on bus stop maintenance and cleaning as many bus shelters have not been cleaned across the whole WECA mayoral transport authority area, Bristol, Bath and South Gloucestershire despite covid 19 regulations as required by the Department for Transport.

Guidance of social distancing.

Passengers have no clear way of phoning the WECA Transport authority.

On railway service we are concerned about the amount of public money being signed off by the chief executive of WECA to the railway industry. There is a £2.5 million pound cost increase to the budget to £26.645 million for the Bristol Temple Meads east entrance project that should be signed off by the Board.

We also want to understand the audit of finance for Portway Parkway station in Bristol which has been subject to a Department for Transport grant for new stations. No work has started on this project.

Money has been allocated for Metro West railway projects to extend the Bristol Temple Meads - Yate service to Gloucester to allow the commissioning of Charfield station and for the service from Bristol to Bathampton turn back to Westbury, Wilts via Bath Spa.

There needs to be a clear WECA audit trail of money to both consultants and Network rail for any station delivery projects not unlike other combined mayoral transport authorities in the West Midlands, Greater Manchester city region and Liverpool city region.

Network Rail are not currently engaged on any construction projects within the Bristol-Bath city region.

We do however have new station projects for St Anne's Park station entered by the local MP and the Frome to Radstock railway line.

Do the Authority have a fully audited railway delivery plan for Metro West with clear budgets and construction dates. Like the mayor of the West Midlands we the keep control of cost within Network rail western routes.

Metro West is important to the economy of the Bristol Bath city region but the Portishead, Severn Beach, Gloucester, Henbury and Westbury lines need to have clear budgets and timescales even with covid 19 delays. There appears to be no delivery date for stations at Ashley Down, Filton North, Henbury, pill or portishead stations until at least 2023 2024.

Saltford is on a plan and Charfield is being worked up to a business case and new station bid.

Can we please have clear audit of Railway planning in the WECA mayoral transport authority. The fact that the transport board meetings are not being held in public are of concern. The biggest problem is that staff do not work in one organisation under Peter Mann's public transport team but are still spread across Bristol City Council, BANES and South Gloucestershire Council, at Temple Meads, Temple Gate, Yate, Keynsham and Bath with agency arrangements in North Somerset Council.

Disabled access bid for station access for all.

Bids need clear diversity impact assessment and involvement of disabled organisations.

Why did network rail stop work on the Patchway station lifts and Gypsy Patch Lane railway bridge replacement.

For metro bus.

The WECA public transport function need audit. There is no clear audit of money spent for the Western Gateway Transport Board functions. There needs to be a complete understanding of public money allocations and functions.

David Redgewell South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside.

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**WECA AUDIT COMMITTEE - 17 JULY 2020
QUESTIONS & REPLIES**

The following questions were submitted by the deadline (full details of questions and the replies are set out in the following pages):

Q1. Question from: Dave Redgewell

Subject: **Transport Functions**

Q2. Question from: Dave Redgewell

Subject: **Transport Functions**

QUESTION 1 - 17 July 2020

Question from: Dave Redgewell

Subject: Transport Functions

Question:

How much money has been spent by WECA mayoral transport authority function on the Covid 19 bus recovery programme and what money has been paid to Bus operators in the West of England Combined Authority area?

RESPONSE:

WECA has so far secured £1.028m of Government grant funding (Covid Bus Service Support Grant) to keep the supported bus network running at a reasonable level during the pandemic and in effect, ensure operators of WECA's contracted services remain in business. This funding has been spent on offsetting farebox revenue losses incurred while services have been running. Operators running previously commercial services that are not contracted to WECA have been able to claim grant directly from Government. We expect the Government to continue funding bus service costs, both to WECA directly and to commercial operators, while passenger numbers remain low.

WECA has committed £9.918m of its own transport budgets up to the end of September to continue bus service contract payments and reimburse operators for concessionary travel. This commitment is in line with the request from Government accompanying the CBSSG award. The breakdown of this spend is as follows:

£8.564m concessionary fare reimbursement (£4.282m for Apr-Jun and the same for Jul-Sep)
£1.354m bus service contract payments (£677k for Apr-Jun and the same for Jul-Sep)

QUESTION 2 - 17 July 2020

Question from: Dave Redgewell

Subject: Transport Functions

Question:

What money was allocated to provide emergency services, provision by using community transport vehicles and were any savings made on this year's budget by not operating services?

RESPONSE:

In line with the decision to commit to continuing contract and concessionary fare payments to bus operators despite services not running fully, WECA Committee agreed to maintain payments to Community Transport providers for their operations at pre-Covid levels in order to ensure they remain in business to start services again. Many CT providers however, have continued to operate, revising their services to support their users by collecting shopping and medical prescriptions. The funding allocated in the WECA budget for Community Transport providers for the first 6 months of the current financial year is £810k. This is all committed.