

## **Public questions and replies**

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## **WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE**

**28 JANUARY 2022**

### **PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REPLIES**

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

- Q 1 David Redgewell - Transport – passengers forum
- Q 2 David Redgewell - Transport – customer service website
- Q 3 Alison Allan - Carbon emissions
- Q 4 Suzanne Audrey - City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement
- Q 5 Cllr Mark Weston (Bristol CC) - Combined Authority web site – carbon generation
- Q 6 Cllr Mark Weston (Bristol CC) - Cancellation of meetings
- Q 7 Cllr Vic Pritchard (B&NES) - Mayor's office
- Q 8 Cllr Karen Warrington (B&NES) - Mayor's office
- Q 9 Cllr Alan Hale (B&NES) - Combined Authority comms team
- Q 10 Cllr Brian Simmons (B&NES) - Combined Authority comms team

## **QUESTION 1**

**Question from: David Redgewell**

**Subject: Transport – passengers forum**

### **Question:**

When is the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council going to set up under the National bus strategy and the west of England bus service improvements plan with North Somerset council?

A bus service Advisory Board and a passengers forum under the Department for transport guidelines. We have not had a passengers forum for 2 years - is a date set with mayor Dan Norris metro mayor and Don Davies leader of North Somerset council for passengers forum meeting

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

I am very keen to meet bus users as soon as possible in a public forum.

We are setting up, with the first meeting in the next two months, a broad-based Bus User Forum (covering the whole West of England area) to offer a wider perspective on operational bus matters across the region and comment on the provision and performance of bus services in the area. I hope this will be a useful input to the consideration, through the year, of changes to the network and also to the Bus Passenger Charter which we are committed to producing by October.

A bus users forum will be very useful in the current climate when Government funding for buses has been slashed.

The Government guidance on delivering Bus Service Improvement Plans using an Enhanced Partnership includes a requirement for the Local Transport Authority to engage with stakeholders such as bus operators, Local Highway Authorities and passenger groups, as well as with the business, health and education sectors. Plans are already in train that draw representatives from these groups into the Enhanced Partnership process via an Advisory Panel which will meet on a regular basis and give advice and make recommendations to the Enhanced Partnership Board on actions necessary to keep the Enhanced Partnership on course towards meeting the targets and objectives from the Bus Service Improvement Plan. The Government has recently revised the timeframe for the completion of Enhanced Partnerships, and we will now look to establishing the Advisory Panel in late spring/early summer subject to further confirmation from Government of the Enhanced Partnership requirements.

## **QUESTION 2**

**Question from: David Redgewell**

**Subject: Transport – customer service website**

### **Question:**

What progress is being made on setting up a customer service website for public transport and bus service and public transport phone number for the travelling public?

in line with the other combined transport Authority in the west Midlands and Greater Manchester combined transport Authority

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

At present, bus and rail operators provide their own customer service and journey planning facilities – both online and by telephone. In addition, there are national timetable and journey planning facilities such as Traveline and National Rail Enquiries.

Travelwest provides up-to-date travel and journey planning information online for the West of England area.

Our Bus Service Improvement Plan includes an aspiration to develop a single customer service point of contact for the bus network and we have bid for funding to deliver that.

Looking to the future, the Mobility-as-a-Service platform, developing as part of the Future Transport Zone Programme, will provide a new way to plan, book and pay for journeys in the West of England. The platform will direct users to the relevant customer services to resolve any issues they have with their journey, booked and paid for through the platform. It will integrate with the above-mentioned single customer service point of contact.

### **QUESTION 3**

**Question from: Alison Allan**

**Subject: Carbon emissions**

**Question:**

What is the actual net change in emissions within the West of England between September 2020 and 2021?

Did it reach the 18% required?

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

There is a huge amount of work to be done to meet our ambitious net zero targets which is why the Combined Authority declared a climate emergency and has recently established a £50m Green Recovery Fund with a focus on retrofitting which is one of the most effective ways of reducing carbon emissions.

Information on the level of greenhouse gas emissions in the region for 2020 and 2021 is not yet available. The Combined Authority uses figures published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy each summer. The most recent data are for 2019, and showed that emissions declined by 3.3% from 2018. The figures are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2019>

## QUESTION 4

**Question from: Suzanne Audrey**

**Subject: City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement**

**Question:**

With regard to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), it is good to see that there are plans to support walking and improve the pedestrian environment in the region.

**Question 1.** Walking and cycling are often conflated in transport plans despite being completely different modes of transport. Please can you give an idea of some infrastructure improvements you are considering specifically for the pedestrian environment?

**Question 2.** The governance structure for CRSTS indicates four project working groups, including one for the 'Walking, Cycling & Liveable Neighbourhood Programme'. Will a representative of a walking/pedestrian organisation be included in this working group to ensure walking is considered as a distinct mode of transport as well as an important element of mixed-mode journeys?

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

Question 1

I was delighted to secure the most funding per head in the country for transport through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement this is a big win for the people of the West of England.

Within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement most of the plans focus on buses as the quickest way to make a big difference. However walking and cycling, along with rail are also key to improving the way people get from A to B.

Our investments focus on delivering six work packages, of which investment in developing a new set of strategic public transport corridors is most significant.

The specific interventions within these corridors aim to improve the frequency, reliability, and service provision of our bus network through bus prioritisation measures. Alongside this we will also improve walking and cycling infrastructure.

Within each corridor we will make it easier for people to walk. Pedestrians will get segregated pavements to walk along wherever possible. We also plan to create top-notch bus stops and improve our key transport interchanges to enable pedestrians to access the wider area more easily.

At junctions we are looking to prioritise sustainable modes of transport. This means prioritising buses and pedestrians at junction points.

Through investment in public transport, over time there will be fewer cars and less congestion meaning that our air quality will improve. This is particularly important for pedestrians.

Our walking, cycling and liveable neighbourhood package, is specifically dedicated to making it easier for pedestrians and cyclists. Again, we will look to improve pedestrian facilities wherever possible, which will include better lighting, improved surfaces and increased widths on footways and additional and improved crossings. The Liveable Neighbourhood schemes will also consider places to stop and rest and trees, plants and shrubs to bring nature to our doorstep .

## Question 2

Throughout the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement process we will be working closely with the newly formed Active Travel England via the Department for Transport. We will share our designs for our sustainable corridors and walking, cycling and liveable neighbourhoods schemes with them. For our pedestrian facilities we will ensure that we comply with relevant policy and best practice, such as the Manual for Streets and Healthy Streets Approach.

We will also be looking to work with representatives from walking and cycling organisations (such as Sustrans as well as Active Travel England) and we will be actively engaging to work to deliver to a high quality and standard.



## **QUESTION 5**

**Question from: Councillor Mark Weston**

**Subject: Combined Authority web site – carbon generation**

### **Question:**

Since it was revealed in September that WECA has one of the highest carbon generating websites of all Local Authorities in the country, it appears no action has been taken (as of 19/01/2022) with it still worse than 94% of other LA websites. Why has no action yet been taken?

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

The website was tested on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021. Since then, there has been a 17% reduction in CO2 emissions produced by the website, when tested again on 26/01/22.

We are working to improve the sustainability of the West of England Combined Authority website, with a focus on image & video optimisation, code optimisation, and hosting and tracking optimisation alongside the core work of ensuring that the website provides useful information to local residents.

## **QUESTION 6**

**Question from: Councillor Mark Weston**

**Subject: Cancellation of meetings**

**Question:**

Since his election last May, how many meetings between the Leaders and Mayors of WECA and the member Councils have been cancelled by the WECA Mayor and/or his office?

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

As Metro Mayor I regularly meet the leaders of South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and Bristol, individually and together. However, unlike my predecessor, I'm also focusing on meeting others including all councillor groups so the voices of backbench councillors – including Green and Independents - are not excluded, the public who have vital expertise to share, and government ministers. I believe it is essential to concentrate on the outside world too, not just on internal matters as in the past, to secure the vital extra funding our great region needs, and importantly, to put it on the national and global map. I'm determined not to follow our pattern of an overly regimented and failed past while regions elsewhere continue to push ahead.

## **QUESTION 7**

**Question from: Councillor Vic Pritchard**

**Subject: Mayor's office**

**Question:**

1. How many members of staff comprise the WECA Mayor's office?
2. Can you please list the various job titles of all the members of staff in the WECA Mayor's office?

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

The Mayor's Office comprises the following roles:

- a. Mayor's Political Adviser
- b. Executive Assistant to the Mayor

Staff across the wider organisation also work closely with the Metro Mayor as the leader of the Combined Authority as and when required.

## **QUESTION 8**

**Question from: Councillor Karen Warrington**

**Subject: Mayor's office**

**Question:**

1. What is the annual salary for all the various roles within the WECA Mayor's office?
2. What are the salary bands for all the various roles within the WECA Mayor's office?

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

As this is a public meeting, any disclosed salaries would be identifiable to the individual members of staff. As with all combined authority employed staff, the two roles supporting the Mayor are subject to independent job evaluation.

## **QUESTION 9**

**Question from: Councillor Alan Hale**

**Subject: Combined Authority comms team**

**Question:**

1. How many members of staff comprise the WECA Comms team?
2. How has the size of the WECA Comms team changed since the Mayor was elected in May 2021?

### **REPLY FROM METRO MAYOR:**

The core Communications team has six members of staff:

Head of Corporate Communications and Marketing – Head of Service

Communications Manager – grade 12

Senior Communications Officer (Media) – grade 9

Communications Officer – grade 8

Engagement and Consultation Officer – grade 9

Senior Internal Communications Officer – grade 9

There are also communications and engagement officers within projects including:

Communications and Engagement Manager (Infrastructure) – grade 11

Communications & Engagement Coordinator (Infrastructure) – grade 6

Future Transport Zone Communications and Engagement Officer – grade 8

South West Energy Hub Comms manager – grade 9

Since May four new people have joined the team – the Communications Officer; South West Energy Hub Snr Communications officer; Future Transport Zone Communications and Engagement Officer and Communications and Engagement co-ordinator (infrastructure).

There is also a marketing team of four directly promoting our services to businesses and residents (ie Growth Hub / Invest Bristol and Bath etc) and a website lead.

## **QUESTION 10**

**Question from: Councillor Brian Simmons**

**Subject: Combined Authority comms team**

**Question:**

1. Can you please list the various job titles of all the members of staff in the WECA Comms team?
2. What are the salary bands for all the various roles within the WECA Comms team?

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Communications Manager – grade 12

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