

West of England Joint Committee 8th April 2022

Comments from the Chairs of LEP and Overview & Scrutiny

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COMMENTS TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

Budget Report

- The budget report highlights how the region continues to benefit from the funds overseen by the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Pleasing to see that BANES have brought forward the proposals and what appears to be as strong business case to acquire the Milson Quarter site, which highlight the importance of our regional cultural assets - in this instance the Fashion Museum - in supporting wider city regeneration through attracting footfall, increasing dwell time, driving spend and overall improving the desirability of the area to commercial and private tenants. I look forward to receiving updates as this flagship project progresses. This links well to the work significant work that the LEP board contributed to in delivering a Cultural Compact for the region.
- I would like to endorse the need to retain the proposed LEP reserves, the drawdown of reserves in the last financial year have been carefully considered and well deployed to support partners and deliver value. With the impending Integration Review and possible changes, it is prudent to do so.

Joint Committee Governance Review

We are in discussions with Government about the next steps for the Local Enterprise Partnership following the review of all Local Enterprise Partnerships. The review commenced in early 2021 and I would like to formally note my thanks to the Board Members and staff at the LEP / Combined Authority for their patience and continued support over the time of this review.

- I have been encouraged by the recognition of the positive impact of LEPs in the Levelling Up Whitepaper, and we look forward to working with Government to take forwards the recommendations to bring the LEP into the Combined Authority and shape a local solution to create a platform to work with North Somerset Council.
- The LEP Board discussed this at their meeting on 30 March. and the Board are keen to work together with Government and the Combined Authority to ensure that a future model builds on our success to date to deliver a vibrant, inclusive and, greener future for our region.
- The LEP recommend that a working group, comprising representatives from the Combined Authority, the LEP, North Somerset and a representative from the three other Unitaries to consider options and proposals to bring before the respective bodies in the early summer.
- I generally agreeable to the proposals within the paper relating to the LEP, but I am keen that the recommendations are clear on the need for the forthcoming review to be undertaken in accordance with the principles set out in the recent letter to LEP Chairs, MCA Mayors and Leaders on the Integration plans for LEP's, and as directed by the recommendations following the recent LEP Board Meeting.

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**WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY – OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – COMMENTS
MADE IN RELATION TO REPORTS FOR WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE
MEETING ON 8 APRIL 2022.**

**THE COMMITTEE ARE REQUESTED TO TAKE THESE COMMENTS INTO CONSIDERATION WHEN
DETERMINING THESE ITEMS**

**THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, CLLR WINSTON DUGUID TO ATTEND THE
MEETING TO PRESENT THE COMMITTEE'S VIEWS**

Part 1 - West of England Combined Authority

Item 9 Mayoral Budget outturn

The committee noted this report and understood the comment about reserves.

Items 10 & 11 – Investment Fund Report (Item 10) & Investment Fund Report – Change Requests
(Item 11)

The Committee noted these reports.

Items 13 & 14 - Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan (Item 13) & Green
Recovery Fund (Item 14)

The Committee were pleased to see this report and have been frustrated that what was originally planned to go through in October had been delayed. The report identifies the questions to be asked of government and the actions between now and 2030 to meet the net zero objective in specific areas of transport, the built environment, business, and energy policy. The plan breaks actions down to three timelines of immediate, medium term (2024-2028) and long-term vision (2028-30). There was also a need to address the Nature Recovery and specifically to reduce chemical use to avoid the harm to pollinating insects. It was also welcomed that the CA recognises it needs to work in collaboration with regional partners, residents, businesses and with Government. UAs could only achieve whatever was in their powers including review of their own estates but had roles in bringing the right people together. The CA was urged to help lobby government to increase local powers in this field.

The Committee also stated that more ambition was needed when designing transport upgrades such as park and rides which could be used for instance as transport hubs and/or bus depots. All aspects of infrastructure needed to be looked at together as a whole (housing, parking, roads, schooling, park & rides, rail etc). Several instances across the region were given where the cart appears to be before the horse-e. g building housing before the infrastructure was in place to get persons to work in a sustainable transport mode. Parking revenue could be used to subsidise public transport provision for instance.

The committee look forward to regular updates and intends to ask the UK climate change committee to benchmark us against other combined authorities later this year.

Item 15 - Regional Recovery & Adaptation Fund

The Committee welcomed the report with support for groups that faced barriers to access. The Committee requested as much support for start-up companies as possible to enable them to grow.

Item 16 - Business Case - "The Courts"

The Committee welcomed the support for the creative sector. The committee asked that given one objective was to breathe new life into an old Victorian building whether other industries could be approached in delivering skills in this task, such as building/renovation skills.

Item 17 - Business Case - "West of England Careers Hub"

The Committee was aware of a booklet that contained details of local businesses and asked that schools and careers hubs in the area had access to such information.

Item 18 - Bus services - Transport Levy

The Committee stated that any policy would have to recognise additional pressures such as fuel price increases and inflation and further recognise that 'hedging' against these pressures would be an additional financial pressure.

Item 19-CRSTS

The committee noted the recommendations made in the report.

Part 2 - West of England Joint Committee

Item 9

The committee noted the latest LEP budget outturn

Item 10

Joint Committee Governance Review

The author did not attend the scrutiny meeting so there was no one to whom we could ask questions. We have no objection to receiving papers from UAs, but this is the second time a paper has been presented and no one has shown up to present.

I have reviewed the paper and were it to be adopted it does raise accountability issues. Also given that we are still finding out the detail from the Levelling Up White paper and the future of the LEP and its relationship within the Combined authority, it seems the wrong time to be making such changes as they may well be going against the direction of travel that HMG are stating will be in place in the future.

Scrutiny reiterated the importance of collaborative working amongst the Authorities, and other bodies such as the Western Gateway (on matters such as the Maritime Strategy). They requested an update at a future meeting regarding any plans for North Somerset to join the Combined Authority, **including a clear timeline/roadmap if possible**, and any effect this would have on the LEP activities as outlined in the recent White Paper.

Cllr Winston Duguid,

Chair

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