

Statements received

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Public Statements – Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11 March 2024

Statement 1 from David Redgewell

With the west of England mayoral combined Authority in special measures we are concerned about progress and working together on public transport and especially bus service the Department for levelling up and are worried about Bristol city council, Banes and South Gloucestershire county council work together and funding through the Transport levy , The Duplication of officer function where Bristol city council, Banes so appear large Transport Department is carrying out functions that should be run by the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority

South Gloucestershire county council has transferred more of its functions and staff to west of England mayoral combined transport Authority, Bus shelter maintenance in Bristol is very expensive for the Taxpayer with Bristol city council attending to repair shelters and infrastructure contractors when the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority attending to repair real-time information systems and put up timetables also happen in South Gloucestershire county council and Banes. By now we should have had and bus shelter maintenance service across the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council, which by now should be applying to join the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority Maintenance and management of bus and coach station and interchanges

Bus service have caused many problems in the city Region with many communities, rural and urban estates
Loosing service because the local councils would not raise the Transport levy ,despite requests from the metro mayor Dan Norris asking councils to protect vital bus and coach services
To work school College university heath provision hospital basic food shopping trips leasure and Tourism facilities,

The councils did not increase the levy
Westlink Demand responsive bus services were not a replacement service as west link Demand responsive bus services is designed as a feeder service to main line ,bus coach and railway services,
So bus service were withdrawn and
In some cases temporary bus ran
and many area were then left in Banes ,south Gloucestershire and Greater Bristol without bus services.
NO OTHER COUNCILS OR COMBINED TRANSPORT AUTHORITYS HAD RUN Temporary bus service in England just get over local elections, but it happened in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus service improvement plan area ,

With many communities without public bus services and the cost of living crisis people unable to afford taxi's
and council leaders and the metro mayor unable to reach agreement on the bus subsidies and bus services improvement plan funding,

Passengers groups, equalities forums
Residents and older people forums
And mps of all colours luke Hall ,kerry

Mccarthy , Geoffrey Clifton Brown ,cotswolds,mp sioban Baillie mp Stroud were Hobhouse mp for Bath all raised the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus network and services to the Cotswolds and in to Somerset unity council area Question in the house of commons to Transport secretary mark Harper mp and the bues minister Richard Holden mp , were raised on the bus service cuts across the city Regional, Somerset and Gloucestershire,

Permission was given to use bus services improvement plan money on support services alongside local council funding to bring back vital bus services in urban and rural communities but talks failed to agree a way forward at west of England mayoral combined t Authority committee and joint committee meetings

So passengers groups, communities groups oider people forum disability equalities forums Residents association tenants association, civic groups.

All ask the secretary of state for Transport mark Harper mp and Michael gove to look at the situation in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council bus service improvement plan area ,

Today we have seen the government take action to bring in panel to help run the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and hopefully focus on delivering public transport Network service for the city Region and restore public bus services,

Following the auditors report.

The also a need for a equalities officer at the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council,

And Panel set up by the Department of levelling up working for stakeholders and passengers

For a clear plan on light rail system planning in the city Region,

For delivery of bus rail Interchange facilities and interchanges,

On Ferry services, Improvement including accessibility to ferries and Harbours ,

The future arrangements for the local Enterprise partnership in the west of England in the Greater Bristol and Bath city region and North Somerset council,

And it's merger in the west of England mayoral combined Authority.

With North Somerset council becoming a full member in the elections of 2025 ,

We need The leaders of Bristol city council, Bristol mayor and future leader leaders of South Gloucestershire county council, Banes and North Somerset council and the metro mayor Dan Norris and officers to be delivering high quality public transport Network services

For the city Region.

Like Andy Burnham in Greater Manchester combined Transport Authority Steve Rotherham Liverpool City Region combined transport Authority, Andy street west Midlands combined Transport Authority,

For Bus services improvement plan panel meetings to include bus service changes agree with passengers group for discussion as per Department for transport instructions and guidelines,

The last meeting finished 25 minutes early and did not discuss the bus operators changes at stagecoach west, First Group plc Wales and West buses Division, Transpora buses, big lemon buses, Gwent vale travel buses, A bus or any other company,

So passengers groups were unable to comment on bus services improvement plan funded services and advice the Bus service improvement plan Advisory Board,

There is major concern about officer running advisor panel working groups and not

Democratically Elected members, raised by Labour Councillor Transport executive councillor

Hannah young, North Somerset council and councillor Don Alexander Transport executive Bristol city council and chair of Western Gateway Transport Board,

And officer representing Banes and South Gloucestershire county council Transport councillors Sarah Warren Fiona_Gourley and Chris Willmore and matt Palmer at South Gloucestershire County council,

We also need to Bus passengers forum

For passengers in the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council area

Especially with Bus services improvement plans having to be Resubmitted to the Department for transport on the 12 th June 2024

Including community safety partnership Working with the police forces.

Avon and Somerset police, British Transport police, Bristol port police,

Intergrated Transport and interchanges improvements With bus rail coach and ferry services, But facilities at Bus stop and interchanges bus and coach station for passengers with reduced mobility,

Details of shortages of bus and coach services staff Drivers cleaners engineers, Supervisors and managers at bus and coach Depot in the city Region at weston super mare, Wells, Bath and Bristol Hengrove and Lawrence Hill Depot of First Group plc, Wales and West buses Division, Stagecoach west Patchway and Stroud bus Depots ,Big lemon buses at parson Street station Bristol, Transpora buses in Lydd Green Bristol, Favesaver buses Chippenham Wiltshire, and other bus operators,

Improvement in Bus and coach clean and presentation of buses washing and cleaning,

Closer working with the western Gateway Transport Board chair councillors Don Alexander

Transport executive Bristol,city council and

Peninsula Transport Board,

Covering the south west of England,

On bus services Some services were saved like the 84 85 yate Park and ride Yate Railway station yate bus and coach station Wickwar Charfield and Wotton under Edge,

Thanks to admission in South Gloucestershire county council councillors Chris Willmore and matt Palmer working with council Phillips Robinson executive member for transport Gloucestershire county council,

But services 622 Cribbs causeway bus station to Bristol zoo, Olverton Alverston Thornbury

Tytherington and yate bus and coach station,

Apart from school buses

Services 10 ,11 Avonmouth Dock, Lawrence weston Westbury on Trym Southmead hospital bus

station uwe bus station Bristol Parkway railway station Aztec west roundabout Hortham Alverston and Thornbury the

Section from Bristol parkway limited service, to Thornbury been withdrawn.

And the very important Bus services from Bristol city centre, st Paul's, St werburgess, Eastville park Stapleton Broomhill ,Fishponds, Downend Bromley Heath has been withdrawn.

With no services to Stapleton and Broomhill still today ,

This was raised in the house of commons by kerry Mccarthy mp and in Bristol city council by Councillor Marley Bennett

Whilst we welcome the bus service improvement in the Bristol city Region
With the new bus services.

By First group plc Wales and West buses Division and Stagecoach west and Transporta buses.
On service 24 Ashton vale estate to Southville ,Bedminster,Bristol city centre, Bristol cabot
circus, oid market Street, Stapleton road Station Eastville park Tesco, Horfield lockleaze
Southmead hospital bus station.

First Group plc bus services

Service 23 Ashton vale estate, Southville, Bedminster, Bristol city centre,
47 Downend, oidbury court, Fishponds Road, Fishponds Road Stapleton road station Eastville
Easton, Bristol city centre,

Service 5 Clifton, Park street Bristol city centre, Bristol Broadmead shopping centre Cabot circus,
Oid market Street, Barton hill, st Anne's park, this service needs Extention Bristlington Hungerford
road, and Knowle

Service 41 Kingwood Town centre, st George, Lawrence hill Station, Bristol city centre Harbourside,
Hotwells, Portway sea Mills, Shirehampton Avonmouth sevenside,
Replacement for service 3 ,Bristol Broadmead shopping centre, Bristol city centre, Park street
Clifton Down station sea Mills ,Shirehampton, Avonmouth Lawrence weston, Henbury and cribs
causeway bus and coach station,
But west of England mayoral combined transport Authority has not put a replacement services in
place for service 3 ,

Service 77 is a new First Group plc Wales and West buses Division service from Henleaze to
Clifton Down station, park street, Bristol city centre Bristol Broadmead shopping centre,
Gloucester Road montpellier railway station approach Horfield Common.
But the service should extend to Southmead hospital bus station,

Service 1 is major issues in Brislington

With a proposal for service from Cribbs causeway bus station Westbury Clifton Down station park
street collage Green, Bristol city centre, Bristol Broadmead shopping centre, cabot circus Bristol
Temple meads station Arnos vale Bristlington sandy park road St Anne's park Guilford Road
Broomhill Brislington Hungerford road Bristlington village School Road loop, as 1 a
Service 1 running on the normal route
From Bristol Temple meads station Arnos vale Bristlington sandy park road shopping centre,
Alison road Bromhill extended to Bristlington park and ride site,

New Transpora buses Bristol

Are Services 90 Imperial park Hartcliffe, Hengrove, knowle Bedminster, Redcliffe Bristol city
centre,

Service 23 Ashton vale estate Southville, Bedminster, Redcliffe, Bristol city centre Bristol
Broadmead shopping centre,

Service 25 Bristol city centre, st Paul's st werburges Eastville park, Fishponds
Higher frequency.

And Sunday services.

925 Newport to Bristol bus and coach station via cribs causeway bus station and Clifton Down
station,

Service 60, Thornbury Failfield, Charfield Cam and the Dursley and Dursley may lane bus and coach
station,

Service 62 Thornbury ,Berkeley sharpness, cam and Dursley station, cam and Dursley may lane bus station,

New operator

Gwent vale

New services west local,

Bath odd Down Park and Ride Tunley, Timsbury Paulton midsomer Norton Westfield Radstock, Bristol to the Chew valley ,

Bristol bus and coach station, Bristol Temple meads station, Totterdown Knowle Hengrove Whitchurch Pensford Clutton Farringdon Gurney Chewton Mendip Wells bus and coach station Glastonbury street to Taunton

Regional service 374

First Group plc Wales and West buses Division

Service 375 Bristol bus and coach station, Bristol Temple meads station,Totterdown Knowle Hengrove Whitchurch Pensford Clutton,Chewton Mendip Wells bus and coach station Glastonbury street Walton to Bridgwater railway station, Bridgwater bus and coach station

New regional bus service,

First Group plc Wales and West buses Division,

Service 376 Bristol bus and coach station, Bristol Temple meads, Totterdown Knowle Hengrove Whitchurch Pensford 376a via Paulton and midsomer Norton Wells bus and coach station Glastonbury and street,

Revised service, 376 a via Paulton and midsomer Norton,

But the following bus services need restoring in Bristol,

Service 25 Or 26 Transporta buses service Bristol city centre, st Paul's, St werburgess Eastville park Stapleton Broomhill Fishponds oidbury court

Stapleton is left with a bus service,

Service 622 cribbs causeway bus station, Bristol Zoo, Olverton Alverston Thornbury Tytherington and yate bus and coach station,

84, 85 Yate park and ride site, Yate railway station, Yate bus station, Wickwar Charfield, Wotton under Edge,

This service needs to retained

Joint with South Gloucestershire county council and Gloucestershire County council

Service 10 11 Avonmouth Dock, shirehampton, Westbury on Trym Southmead hospital bus station, extension to uwe bus station, Bristol Parkway railway station Aztec west roundabout Hortham Alverston and Thornbury,

Service 522 Bristol city centre Bristol Temple meads station Arnos vale Bristlington keynsham marksbury Timsbury, Paulton midsomer Norton Westfield Radstock, Peasdown st john Bath spa bus and coach station,

Need diversion via chandag Road in Keynsham,

Bishopsworth to Hengrove, Bedminster Bristol city centre,

Tesco Eastville, Eastville, Easton and Dings and Bristol Temple meads station need a westlink Demand responsive bus services,

But we need to get the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council, city Region, to work together with Bristol city council, caz money and Transport levy ,Banes council caz money Transport levy, South Gloucestershire county council transport levy All council car park charges ,to fund bus services

On westlink Demand responsive bus services

Westlink Demand responsive bus operated by Ezecc medical services drivers are not on EU regulations.

The Traffic Commissioner Kevin Rooney has instructed the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council to design 20 minute zones that connect with Bus services coach services and metro west Railway Network services,

So westlink buses are not being used for middle Class taxis style services

But link to park and ride site at long Ashton ,Bristlington, Odd Down, Portway park and ride, Bristol parkway, Emerson green, and Yate .

Cribbs causeway bus station, Southmead hospital bus station, uwe Bus and coach station, Filton Abbey wood station, Patchway station, Bristol parkway station, Bristol Temple meads station to connect with metro west railway Network stations

Hub at Bristol Airport connections with the Falcon coaches part of megabus Scottish City link coaches to Bristol city centre, Bristol Bond Street.

Churchill ,East Brent, Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington, Cullompton Exeter, Newton Abbot and Plymouth coach station,

We need westlink Demand responsive bus services to link people to school College university work ,Heath care hospital, basic food shopping, shopping centres leisure and Tourism, It is essential that we get Demand responsive bus services that do not cost the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council more than £ 10 per passenger which the cost per passenger is now costing a considerable higher amount of Taxpayers money, Or will this service contract just run its present form until it is terminated in 18 months time ,

Metro west railway Network

We need to make progress on the Bristol Temple meads station Bedminster parson Street, Ashton Gate new station, pill and Portishead,

Bristol Temple meads station, Bristol Lawrence hill, Bristol Stapleton road Ashley Down station, Filton Abbey wood station, Filton North, Henbury for cribbs causeway and Bristol zoo,

We need see progress on the new Railway station at Henbury including disabled access to Henbury Village for passengers with reduced mobility and partly sighted passengers, mother and Father's with buggies.

and progress on Charfield station,

On the Bristol Temple meads station Filton Abbey wood, Bristol parkway station, Yate Charfield new station, cam and Dursley, stonehouse Bristol Road Gloucester central Cheltenham spa Ashchurch for Tewkesbury Worcester Shrub Hill, Worcester Forgate Street,

We also need signalling on the new level crossing at Avonmouth Dock as Network rail are replacing the level crossing, so we must plan for the Henbury loop expansion,

Disabled accessible lift to weston super mare lift Nalisea and Backwell, Parson Street, Bristol Lawrence, Bristol Stapleton road, Avonmouth, Cheltenham spa,
And an number of accessible train to

To replace the inter city Express trains on the Bristol Temple meads station to Filton Abbey station, Bristol parkway station yate,Charfield new station Cam and Dursley, Gloucester central, Cheltenham spa Ashchurch for Tewkesbury Worcester Shrub Hill Worcester Forgate Street, Inter city Express trains cross country

Can not pick up wheelchair accessible passengers in first class wheelchair space if if the train does not platform at Yate, Cam and Dursley and Ashchurch for Tewkesbury

With the need for a transport plan bus services and metro west Railway Network services for the gravity factory in Bridgwater Somerset

On Agrulas Tata factory in Purton working With Bridgwater Town Council, Somerset council Transport Authority, western Gateway Transport Board chair councillors Don Alexander Transport executive Bristol city council, and Peninsula Transport Board, chair councillors Andra Davis , Bus and coach services network with First group plc South buses Division From Greater Bristol, South Bristol weston super mare and Bath,

and a railway link on metro west Railway Network to Puriton Station on the freight railway line in the Battery's factory to move the Battery's to the west Midlands Tata BMW factory, Passengers railway services from Bristol Temple meads station, Bedminster Parson street, Nalisea and Backwell, Yatton for clevedon, Worle parkway, Weston million, Weston super mare, Highbridge and Burnham on sea to Puriton station,New station Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington,New station Cullompton new station and Exeter St David s

West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council need to play Major role in in the Bristol city Region and the south west of England,

We must make the west of England mayoral combined Authority with North Somerset council as a full member work for passengers residents and stakeholders of the region.
David redgewell South west transport Network and Railfuture Severnside,

Statement 2 from Sarah Warren (Cllr) (Bath and North East Somerset)

I am Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Cabinet Member for Climate Emergency and Sustainable Travel, and B&NES transport lead on the WECA Planning, Housing and Transport Board

In this Statement I wish, firstly, to bring to the Committee's attention the fact that WECA has consistently failed to work with B&NES over the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), to the detriment of the residents of B&NES, and; secondly, to ask for the Committee's assistance in ensuring that in the vital next few months in the run up to the June BSIP resubmission to the DfT, the Combined Authority takes steps to ensure that B&NES is treated as a partner in the consultation and decision making process as to how BSIP money should be spent.

I made a statement on BSIP to the BSIP Task and Finish Group of the Scrutiny Committee at the meeting on 20 November 2023 to similar effect, but unfortunately few real improvements took place after that meeting, and indeed further examples of the Combined Authority imposing decisions upon B&NES without consultation, or any effort to work together, have taken place since.

I will set out some of the prime examples of the failings of the Combined Authority in relation to working on BSIP.

Firstly, the manner in which the Joint Planning, Housing and Transport Board has been conducted.

I believe there has been no substantive agenda item at that Board on BSIP at this forum since December 2022, although either I or my officers have requested its inclusion at every meeting since January 2023, so that it can be discussed between the Combined Authority Officers, the Mayor and the Unitary Authority officers and members in that setting. However, despite these requests it has not featured on the agenda.

In relation to a question asked by a member of the Scrutiny Committee at the public meeting held on 22 January 2024 as to why the Mayor had vetoed BSIP as an agenda item for the Transport Advisory Board meetings, the Mayor answered that he was not aware of vetoing anything, and indicated that if information were submitted in advance to ensure a focused discussion, then agenda items proposed by Board members might be allowed, depending on their topic. I later learned from B&NES officers that it had been confirmed to them by WECA officers that my requests that BSIP be included on the agenda of Advisory Board meetings had been passed to the Mayor on more than one occasion and rejected by him.

After this meeting I then asked for BSIP to be included on the agenda of the meeting to be held on 19 February, and indeed submitted a paper on the topic, as the Mayor had indicated would be necessary. However, BSIP did not appear on that agenda and when I asked for it to be discussed under Any Other Business the Mayor refused this request, saying that the subject had been discussed at the WECA committee meeting, where decisions had been taken, and that he felt a 1:1 meeting with me would be the best way forward. I refused this proposal, stating that the topic was so important it required airing in a formal setting, and because it concerned all unitary authorities, not just B&NES. Cllr Alexander, the Bristol representative on the committee, then agreed with me that the Joint Planning, Housing and Transport Board was the appropriate forum for a discussion about BSIP.

Secondly, on numerous occasions, it has been through press releases that B&NES officers, transport members and ward councillors have found out for the first time about decisions made by the Combined authority on bus transport and how BSIP funds are to be directed which directly affect the residents of B&NES. The main examples of this are as follows.

The Combined Authority failed to consult or work with B&NES in relation to the Birthday Bus Decision. B&NES transport officers and members first heard that a decision had been made to spend £8 million of BSIP funds on the birthday bus initiative when it was announced by the press on 23rd May 2023. Given that the birthday bus offer would only benefit those residents near routes which were not affected by cuts, this was always going to be an extremely controversial decision, given the lack of benefit to the primarily rural communities who no longer had a bus service at all.

A second example of this was the very recent bid by Paulton Parish Council under the WestLocal scheme for a bus to travel between Paulton and the Odd Down Park and Ride. There was no consultation between the Combined Authority and B&NES officers in relation to this bid. Indeed, I am informed that the Combined Authority Officers were told not to share any details with B&NES officers or councillors regarding the proposed bus or its route until the press announcement which was made on 20 February. The negotiations leading up to his announcement had been

taking place over at least the previous 7 months or so, so there was ample time to discuss the proposal with the relevant B&NES officers and transport members, as well as ward and parish councillors of the affected nearby communities.

In addition as a result of the failure to collaborate with B&NES or communicate the detail at all, there have been serious consequences, namely:

A private bus company's plan to provide a commercially viable service, to cover the same communities, but including additional villages, and continuing into central Bath, has been undermined by the subsidised service, with the opportunity lost to develop a commercially sustainable service for the benefit of a larger number of residents for the long term.

A large number of residents in rural areas south of Bath still have no regular bus service, and this particularly impacts the elderly and vulnerable. It will now be more difficult to find a way to provide a regular bus service, given that a large chunk of the route that would have been available to a commercial provider is covered by a subsidised service. Work carried out by B&NES officers and ward councillors on a viable more inclusive service that could perhaps have been provided by re-routing an existing service, so potentially for free, has been ignored.

No consultation took place with the owner or operator (ie B&NES) of the Odd Down Park and Ride which has been publicised as the terminus of the new bus route. A bus service has been announced to the public without arrangements being entered into to enable the proposed bus to use the park and ride, and we are now looking into whether this is possible.

Neither the logistics of a bus load of passengers arriving at a destination currently optimised for a steady flow of passengers for onward travel into the city centre, nor the economic issue of asking passengers to pay twice for their bus journey without any through ticketing arrangements being in place, have been addressed by WECA. Assuming the logistical issues can be overcome to permit delivery of this service as announced, it will not deliver as well as it might for the passengers it is intended to serve.

A further example of B&NES learning of decisions affecting our district via the press was the announcement on 19th November that a Westlink vehicle would be "tethered" to Keynsham station, a decision that I understand has now been reversed due to lack of public interest, but in both cases without discussion with B&NES.

The third failing I wish to highlight is the failure of the Combined Authority to work with B&NES officers and transport members in relation to solutions to resolve the region's needs once supported services had been cut. Particular examples of this are as follows.

On 11 July 2023 the Leader of B&NES Council wrote to the Mayor to propose a new, innovative, cost effective proposal for a network of local bus routes in North East Somerset. It was compiled with neighbouring Council leaders, residents, NES Ward councillors of all parties, Parish Councillors, public transport experts, and with bus campaigners in the B&NES area, with the objective of designing a network of the most cost-effective routes that could best support residents. We also suggested innovative sources of funding including potential for co-funded routes with neighbouring councils in Wiltshire and Somerset. No serious consideration has ever been given to that proposal, no discussion, no engagement, it had simply been ignored until this week, when we have received a query from WECA as to where we would like to see BSIP funds spent.

The same proposal was put before the Mayor at a meeting on 3 August 2023 and at that meeting the Mayor agreed to a round table meeting with Councillors and officers, but that meeting has never been held.

From July 2023 onwards, both Councillor Gourley, who works closely with me on buses, and my officers, have been writing to Combined Authority officers to bring to their attention our concern that the planning which was apparently taking place in relation to a bus route from Paulton to Bath under the WestLocal scheme may omit nearby communities. Despite numerous requests from that date onwards, the Combined Authority has refused to share any detail of the 'Paulton bid' with Cllr Gourley, with B&NES officers, or with myself as I described above, until the finalised proposal was announced in the press release on 20 February 2024, seven months after the potential problems were brought to the Combined Authority's attention.

I would also point out that the whole decision to allocate any funds under the WestLocal system was itself made without any consultation with unitary authorities, and the basis for and justification for this decision has never been communicated or understood. That decision seems to have been taken over a year ago, but the Director Decision notice was only published on 29th February this year.

The result is that bus routes are being allocated using BSIP funds, with no consultation with B&NES transport officers or neighbouring Ward Councillors. The bids are dependent on parish councillors, in other words local volunteers, having the expertise, time and courage to mount a bid for a bus service for their parish rather than routes being planned for populations by transport officers, who are professionals with a full overview of the needs of all communities in the region to work on the best options using the information available to them.

Indeed, as a result of the failure of the Combined Authority to provide B&NES with any information in relation to the WestLocal initiative I, as B&NES' transport representative to WECA, have had to resort to issuing a Freedom of Information request (on 9 February) to seek the following information:

- (1) the selection criteria being used to choose between WestLocal bids in Bath and North East Somerset.
- (2) a copy of all WestLocal bids submitted by neighbourhoods in B&NES
- (3) the scores against the selection criteria of the B&NES WestLocal bids
- (4) a copy of all materials, correspondence and information that have been shared with North Somerset Unitary Authority regarding the B&NES WestLocal bids and the selection process.

WECA has not acted appropriately as the transport authority and has failed to coordinate between the bus operator and the highways authority as they should. Recent service changes such as the introduction of the Paulton service should have been shared before publication with B&NES as the highways authority but were not; and in the other direction, we believed that WECA as the transport authority would be conveying the needs of our residents as we had expressed them to the Combined Authority onwards to bus operators. Both sides, unitary authorities and bus operators, have been labouring under the misapprehension that information was freely flowing

My purpose in bringing these matters to the Committee's attention today is in the hope that it will help to change the approach and behaviour of the Combined Authority in the future. We are at a critical point, in particular as the next phase of BSIP covering the period 2025-30 needs to be planned in the next three months. It is essential that the Combined Authority starts treating B&NES and the other Unitary Authorities as partners and works to agree with them how BSIP can be put to the best use for the whole region during its next phase. We need to put in place a

timetable now as to how this collaboration will be run in the next few weeks and months because, as ever, time is short.

This statement is made just days after the imposition of the Best Value Notice on 5 March by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Concerns expressed in that notice included: 'The poor state of professional relationships between the West of England Combined Authority Mayor and the representatives of the constituent members of the Authority which is impacting partnership working and potentially limiting the authority's ability to optimise strategic opportunities'. In the Notice it is recommended in particular that the Combined Authority should 'reset the culture and relationships between the West of England Combined Authority Mayor and representatives of the constituent members of the Authority'.

I sincerely hope that this Notice will be used as a force for positive change and improvement to how the Combined Authority works with B&NES and the other Unitary Authorities, starting from now, and be monitored by both the Scrutiny and Audit Committees. I call for the senior officers of the Combined Authority to present to this committee their concrete proposals as to how this is to be done, including how work on BSIP will progress, from now on.

Statement 3 from Emilia Melville (for WESTACT and Reclaim our Buses)

We are concerned about the recent Best Value Notice issued to WECA by central government. In our campaigning for proper investigation of bus franchising as an option for the West of England, we have directly observed the "poor state of professional relationships between the West of England Combined Authority Mayor and the representatives of the constituent members of the Authority" mentioned in the notice. We are not privy to the full reasons for these poor relationships, but we can see the way they are hampering the delivery of effective bus services:

- lower Transport Levy provision than would otherwise be the case
- lack of progress on investigation of bus franchising

Coordinating shared delivery of coherent public transport across the three unitary authorities of the West of England is not an easy feat. Each has different economic, demographic and geographical challenges, and each is protective of the interests of their own constituents. The role of WECA in bringing these interests together into a shared delivery of transport, that benefits the citizens of all three unitaries, is essential. We are disappointed not to see this happening yet. Whether the responsibility for this lies with Dan Norris or with leaders within the Unitary Authorities, or historic and political differences is not clear, but the people of the West of England deserve joined up leadership that prioritises citizen needs.

We look forward to seeing the outcomes of the citizens panel. The use of a sortition based panel to develop prioritisation for valuing bus routes may be a good way of getting beyond the concerns that rural or urban authorities may cross subsidise each other, and may lead to greater trust and willingness to increase the transport levy. However, we are concerned that there do not appear to be any wheelchair users in the photo, and whilst we welcome the use of sortition based citizen decision making in many cases, the people most reliant on buses may not have had enough of a say.

We are also concerned about the narrow framing of the citizens panel - how to decide which routes to prioritise - and would welcome further panels which consider wider possibilities such as bus franchising, bringing in precepting powers, and ringfencing of charges such as the clean air zone charge or any workplace parking and other car parking charges for buses and other public

transport measures. These are controversial issues which could benefit from citizen participation and discussion.