

Minutes of the West of England Combined Authority Committee Extraordinary Meeting, Friday, 29 July 2022

Members:

Metro Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority
Cllr Kevin Guy, Bath & North East Somerset Council (not present, sent substitute)
Cllr Toby Savage, South Gloucestershire Council (not present, sent substitute)
Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council (not present, sent substitute)

Richard Bonner, Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership (non-voting member of the Committee)

1	<p>EVACUATION PROCEDURE</p> <p>The meeting was held at Ashton Gate Stadium and the evacuation procedure was noted. The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and thanked attendees for their attendance at short notice. The meeting was streamed on the Authority’s youtube channel.</p>
2	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Mayor Marvin Rees (Cllr Don Alexander attended as substitute), Cllr Toby Savage (Cllr Steve Reade attended as substitute) and Cllr Kevin Guy (Cllr Tim Ball attended as a substitute).</p> <p>Also present were Richard Bonner, Chair of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership and Cllr Huw James (North Somerset Council) on behalf of the Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Winston Duguid who had sent his apologies.</p>
3	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCALISM ACTION 2011</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest declared.</p>
4	<p>CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>There were no announcements from the Chair.</p>
5	<p>ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (STATEMENTS, QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS)</p> <p>Due to the meeting being an extraordinary meeting called at short notice only questions and statements relating to the topic under discussion had been accepted. Two questions had been received from one individual for this meeting. The questions and responses had been published on the Authority’s website.</p> <p>Two statements had been received prior to the submission deadline. A third statement was received under the discretion of the Chair due to the late notice of the meeting. The statements were made available on the Authority’s website.</p> <p>The following members of the public attended the meeting and addressed the meeting for up to three minutes each:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christina Biggs; 2. David Redgewell; 3. Dave Chillistone <p>The Chair also invited the Leader of North Somerset Council, Cllr Steve Bridger, to address the meeting. His points are summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He thanked the Mayor for calling the meeting on this important issue; • He stated that the issue had become more complex in recent years and welcomed the jointly promoted scheme. He thanked the Combined Authority, officers at both North Somerset Council and the Combined Authority, Network Rail and the DfT; • The initial funding had been secured in 2017 and he welcomed the further commitments which was a big moment in the project.

<p>6</p>	<p>COMMENTS FROM CHAIR OF LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP</p> <p>Richard Bonner, the Chair of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership was invited to address the meeting and made the following statement:</p> <p>Portishead Line Investment</p> <p>We are pleased to see that we have an opportunity to move the delivery of the Metro West 1 Portishead Line another step closer, with a decision today by the Combined Authority to match the additional funding being offered by both Government and North Somerset Council.</p> <p>MetroWest 1 (Portishead Line) will transform rail access and connectivity between Bristol and Portishead and the surrounding area, whilst significantly contributing to addressing the unsustainable highway congestion where the M5 dissects the A369 east of Portishead at junction 19.</p> <p>Building upon other public transport schemes implemented in recent years, such as MetroBus, the scheme is another step towards achieving the West of England region’s transport vision of having a well-connected network that works for all. The MetroWest Phase 1 scheme strongly aligns with national priorities, by improving connectivity to support economic growth, tackling deprivation and encouraging the use of lower carbon transport modes. The scheme is deliverable in a relatively short timescale, helping the city region to build a better, greener and more accessible future in a timely manner.</p> <p>We note that the value engineering has identified some areas of scope reduction, and we hope that officers can provide future flexibility to reinstate features such as extended platforms as part of any future business case for investment.</p> <p>Strategic Intent</p> <p>We have been successful in recent times at securing a significant CRSTS settlement, but we want to see ongoing clear long term strategic planning, that will enable us to bring forward investible propositions for future CRSTS rounds 2 / 3 and beyond. It would be great to see a 10-15 year time horizon on investment pipeline.</p> <p>To deliver the infrastructure that we need, to tackle the inequalities that exist in our neighbourhoods, that deliver the jobs and housing, and help to decarbonise our transport systems. We would like to be able to engage and support long term visioning and strategic thinking that delivers a regional housing plan, shapes our mass transit proposal, creates an investible proposition for tackling flooding and climate adaptations, and creates a roadmap of investment and delivery that business can support and work with to make this the thriving region we all want.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</p> <p>Cllr Huw James addressed the meeting on behalf of the West of England Combined</p>

Authority. His comments are summarised below:

- The Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been consistent in its comments during its oversight of this issue, e.g. had been supportive of the Portishead Line project and hoped that the Authority would approve the additional funding;
- The O&S Ctte also welcomed the agreement between the DfT, the Combined Authority and North Somerset Council, particularly the willingness of the DfT to act as guarantor for future slippage and inflation costs upon approval of the final business case;
- He stated that 5 car trains may still be able to operate as they did at other stations with 3-car length platforms and this was a scope item that could be added at a later date. Councillors had also supported the idea of using a public-private partnership to provide station facilities if this can help fund these facilities;
- Scrutiny had also been indicated in the past their support of the wider Wyndham Way study area to explore multimodal transport around the heart of Portishead.
- He also welcomed the assurances that the line would be fully wheelchair accessible;
- Cllr James stated that this project showed the strength of the West of England Partnership as North Somerset Council could not have delivered this on its own and had required patience, diplomacy and advocacy from the local authorities, the Combined Authority and local MPs.

8 METROWEST 1 (PORTISHEAD LINE)

Metro Mayor Dan Norris introduced the report on Metrowest 1 (Portishead Line). He stated that he was delighted that there was some good news to report on the Bristol to Portishead railway line.

He stated that the Authority had secured £15.5m of government cash after considerable efforts from both the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset Council.

He said that if the £10m was agreed then that was all the remaining funding needed to finish the design and the building and construction work to re-open the railway line. He proposed the recommendations.

The recommendations were seconded by Cllr Don Alexander.

Cllr Alexander stated that the investment was welcomed by Bristol City Council and would provide a fast link between Portishead and south Bristol and would help towards meeting ambitious net zero targets and was one of the key schemes that would help transform travel in the region, giving people access to jobs and sustainable economic growth. It may also help to open up opportunities for a station around Ashton Gate in the future. He welcomed that the DfT was taking on the risks with inflation on the increase. Whilst the re-opening of the station was not expected to reopen until December 2024 the public could now be confident that the project would now be delivered.

Cllr Reade stated that South Gloucestershire Council supported the recommendations. The reopening of the line could be expected to help drive down car dependency, whilst not penalising car ownership and helping work towards carbon neutrality targets. Whilst the report focussed on Metrowest 1 (Portishead Line) he asked that focus on Metrowest 2 and stations adjacent to the development at the old Filton Airfield were kept in sight otherwise those areas may end up with increased congestion. He asked that a report setting out the Metrowest project as a whole be brought to a future committee as the issues identified in Phase 1 had the potential to be replicated in Phase 2. He asked that the land that would have been used was given some sort of safeguarding provision.

Cllr Ball stated that Bath & North East Somerset Council supported the recommendations. He felt it was important to get the rail network back together as part of the Mass Transit solution to reduce pollution across the whole area. He hoped other stations would be opened in the future at Ashton Gate, Saltford and Corsham.

- Voting arrangements: Decision required majority agreement of Committee Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority) and including the West of England Combined Authority Mayor.

Upon being put to the vote it was unanimously

Agreed: That the West of England Combined Authority approve the allocation of a further £10m of funding for MetroWest 1 (Portishead Line) from the Investment and Transforming Cities Funds.

The Metro Mayor thanked everybody for attending the meeting at short notice.

Signed:

Date: