

A meeting of the

## **West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

will be held on

**Date:** Friday, 8 September 2023

**Time:** 12.00 pm

**Place:** 70 Redcliff Street, Bristol BS1 6AL

Notice of this meeting is given to members of the West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee as follows

Cllr David Addison, South Gloucestershire Council  
Cllr Mark Bradshaw, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Katy Grant, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Jonathan Hucker, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Tim Kent, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Ed Plowden, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Ayden Pocock, South Gloucestershire Council  
Cllr Ben Randles, South Gloucestershire Council  
Cllr Alison Streatfeild-James, Bath and North East Somerset Council

**Enquiries to:**

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# West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee Agenda

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- Inspect background papers used to prepare public reports for a period public reports for a period of up to four years from the date of the meeting. (A list of background papers to a report is given at the end of each report.) A background paper is a document on which the officer has relied in writing the report.
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To comply with the Data Protection Act 2018, we require the consent of parents or guardians before filming children or young people. For more information, please speak to the camera operator.

## **1. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To note the committee's membership as set out on the agenda and to receive apologies for absence from Members.

## **2. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24**

The Committee to elect a Chair for Municipal Year 2023/24.

## **3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2023/24**

Having elected a Chair, the Committee is invited to elect a Vice-Chair for Municipal Year 2023/24.

## **4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011**

Members who consider that they have an interest to declare are asked to: a) State the item number in which they have an interest, b) The nature of the interest, c) Whether the interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest, non-disclosable pecuniary interest or non-pecuniary interest. Any Member who is unsure about the above should seek advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to the meeting in order to expedite matters at the meeting itself.

## **5. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee is invited to note its Terms of Reference.

## **6. MINUTES**

5 - 12

To consider and approve the minutes from 13 March 2023 of the West of England Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **7. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*To receive any Chair's announcements.*

## **8. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS)**

### **WRITTEN PUBLIC QUESTIONS (written procedure)**

1. Any member of the public can submit a maximum of two written questions in advance of this meeting.

2. The deadline for the submission of questions is 5.00 pm, at least 3 clear working days ahead of a meeting. For this meeting, the deadline for questions is **5.00 pm on 4 September 2023**

3. Questions should be addressed to the Chair of the meeting and e-mailed to [democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

4. Under the direction of the Chair, wherever possible, written replies to questions will be sent to questioners by the end of the working day prior to the meeting.

5. Please note - under the Combined Authority's committee procedures, there is no opportunity for oral supplementary questions to be asked at committee meetings.

6. The written questions and replies will be circulated to committee members in advance of the meeting and published on the Combined Authority website.

### **PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

1. Any member of the public may submit a written statement (or petition) to this

meeting.

2. Please note that one statement per individual is permitted.

3. Statements must be submitted in writing and received by the deadline of 12 noon on the working day before the meeting. For this meeting, the deadline for statements is **12 noon on 7 September 2023**. Statements should be emailed to [democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

4. Statements will be listed for the meeting in the order of receipt. All statements will be sent to committee members in advance of the meeting and published on the Combined Authority website.

5. Please note:

If any member of the public wishes to attend the meeting to orally present their statement, they are asked please to notify the Combined Authority's Democratic Services team of this at the point when their statement is submitted and by 12 noon on the working day before the meeting at the very latest.

For those presenting their statements at the meeting, up to 3 minutes 'speaking time' is permitted for each statement. The total time available for the public session at this meeting is 30 minutes.

<b>9. REGIONAL STRATEGY REFRESH</b>	13 - 20
To receive an update an update on the process underway to refresh the regional strategy.	
<b>10. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE WORKSTREAM UPDATE</b>	21 - 26
To receive an update on progress with the actions in the governance workstream of the Transformation Programme	
<b>11. OPERATION OF OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	27 - 34
To consider the proposals and options to inform a discussion on the future operation of the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) function	

**Next meeting: Monday, 2 October 2023**

# Agenda Item 6

## West of England Combined Authority West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday, 13 March 2023, 10.00 am - 12.20 pm  
Bristol City Council Council Chamber, City Hall, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR

### Present:

Cllr Winston Duguid, Bath and North East Somerset Council	Cllr Ed Plowden, Bristol City Council
Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council	Cllr Steve Smith, Bristol City Council
Cllr Geoff Gollop, Bristol City Council	Cllr Tristan Clark, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council	Cllr Matthew Riddle, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Steve Pearce, Bristol City Council	Cllr Andrew Varney, Bristol City Council

### Present from North Somerset Council (observers)

Cllr Huw James  
Cllr Mike Bird

### Officers In Attendance:

Richard Ennis, Interim Acting Chief Executive	Roger Hoare, Head of Environment
Stephen Fitzgerald, Interim Director of Investment and Corporate Services	Selonge Russell, Head of Finance and Procurement
Stephen Gerrard, Interim Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Pete Davis, Head of Grant Management and Assurance
Alistair Kirk, Interim Director of Infrastructure	Jessica Lee, Head of Policy & Strategy
Andy Cornelius, South Gloucestershire Council	

### Apologies:

Cllr Brian Allinson, South Gloucestershire Council

## Minutes

1	<b>Evacuation Procedure</b> The Evacuation Procedure was noted.
2	<b>Apologies for absence</b> Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Brian Allinson (South Gloucestershire Council) and Cllr Peter Crew (North Somerset Council). Cllr Andrew Varney was thanked for attending on behalf of Bristol City Council.
3	<b>Declarations of Interest under the Localism Act 2011</b> There were no declarations of interest declared.
4	<b>Minutes</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
5	<b>Chair's Announcements</b> The Chair made no announcements.
6	<b>Items from the Public (Questions, Statements and Petitions)</b> Two questions had been received from one member of the public in advance of the meeting. These questions and replies had been published on the Authority's website and had been

circulated.

In addition three statements had been received from members of the public in advance of the meeting. One member of the public attended the meeting to submit their statement in person: David Redgewell, South West Transport Network and Railfuture Severnside. Adam Reynolds had also submitted a statement but had been unable to attend the meeting. However, the Chair asked for it to be read out as it contained important information about the CRSTS allocation. A statement had also been submitted by Ian Beckey, Gloucestershire Catch the Bus Service Campaign and Brendon Taylor, Bristol Disability Equalities Network & Somerset catch the bus campaign. The statements had been published on the Authority's website and had been circulated.

The Metro Mayor Dan Norris attended the meeting and participated in a question and answer session with Members of the Committee. Issues from the statements included:

- Cllr Geoff Gollop noted that the issues referred to by Mr Adam Reynolds had been raised at Audit Committee and internal audit were looking at aspects of this during the course of this year. He requested that the statement be referred to internal audit.
- Cllr Ed Plowden mentioned concern about a liveable neighbourhoods approach, noting that Government guidelines state that "largely cosmetic" approaches are not a suitable use of Active Travel budgets, and there was a risk that Mr Reynolds' comments about B&NES and the near-doubling of a budget in Bristol might be questioned as to whether it was a legitimate use of the funding.

It was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would monitor the process of the £540m spend, noting the importance of officers synching on this matter.

### **Direct Response Transport and West link**

Members queried when the West Link website would be launched since the scheme commenced in 3 weeks. It had been noted that there would be a need for effective communication and promotion, particularly in those areas losing bus services.

The Metro Mayor advised that overall, these pots of money had a very small window of spend, for instance a couple of years in relation to the Bus Service Improvement Plan. A longer lead in time would be preferred with West Link but the funding would be lost if not used and officers had been working hard to ensure the window would be met.

Members noted that West Link was not a substitute for all the subsidised buses that had been cut. The Combined Authority (CA) was working with the Unitary Authorities (UAs) to create a system irrespective of cuts. Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) would pick up people from virtual bus stops or local bus stops and take them to the main routes. This was why there had been a big investment to improve the frequency on the main routes. However, it was noted that it was not going to meet the needs of, for example, school children.

The Metro Mayor confirmed that he would be happy to hold discussions concerning West Link and advised it would roll out from April. He acknowledged that it would not be considered perfect by all but that learning points would be responded to. He also wished to remind members that this was the biggest on demand public transport system created in England which he wanted to prove to be commercially viable. He noted the shortage of drivers and advised that West Link information would be made public as soon as possible.

From the perspective of North Somerset, there was a missed opportunity where DRT was being used to backfill missing services. It was felt there is a huge opportunity to create

integrated transport facilities and hubs and that DRT was not sustainable in the longer term in encouraging people out of their cars.

The Metro Mayor confirmed that he had no influence over existing subsidised services and that he hoped the situation would improve following the May 2023 elections.

It was acknowledged that from the viewpoints of residents, they just see that they no longer have a bus service. It was understood that residents may not be aware of DRT provision, that some areas would not have DRT, and that this may lead to people purchasing cars. It was felt there was a real disconnect and lack of recognition, and that residents' needs are not going to be met. It was suggested that a public consultation could be held should agreement not be found between the UAs and the Combined Authority.

### **Other transport issues**

Members queried whether funding would be set aside for franchising. It was suggested that the precept could be set up from the start as one package. A masterplan for walking and cycling was also requested, with maps of proposed corridors. It was also suggested that more due diligence was required from Bristol City Council on maintenance.

The Metro Mayor noted that without precepting the region would not have franchising. At the moment, South Gloucestershire Council did not want franchising nor precepting. He advised that he would be investigating the roll out of this in Greater Manchester later this year but highlighted that we do not have Greater Manchester's tram system which would be very helpful in terms of franchising.

It was noted that the recruitment of drivers was the pressing issue of the day.

The Metro Mayor was asked to confirm whether he or the Combined Authority Transport Team had agreed that any future subsidy on new routes under BSIP would only be given to bus routes that have a cost per passenger of less than £40.

<b>Function</b>	<b>2022/23 Levy budget allocation</b>	<b>2022/23 Levy spend forecast</b>
Transport Operations Team	855,622	855,622
Transport Operations Team	855,622	855,622
Community Transport Grants	1,653,017	1,693,146
Concessionary Fares	13,018,696	9,477,081
Real Time Information	402,622	401,645
Supported Bus Services	3,059,462	9,320,000
metrobuses	72,741	72,741
Bus Information	177,142	175,377
Travel west	13,668	13,668
Integrated Ticketing	215,830	215,830
	<b>19,468,800</b>	<b>22,225,110</b>
<b>Additional income</b>		
Lost mileage		(237,397)
S106		(462,549)
Bus Service Operator Grant		(1,147,621)
<b>Net forecast spend</b>		<b>20,377,543</b>

	<b>Forecast overspend</b>	<b>908,743</b>

N.B. Forecast overspend is to be offset by reserve from 21/22

The Metro Mayor was also questioned on the current year's projected overspend on supported buses — it is forecasted to be triple what was originally budgeted.at over £9.3m (see above). Why such an overspend?

The Interim Strategic Director for Infrastructure confirmed this matter would be investigated with a response being provided following the meeting. (see Appendix 1 for more details)

The Interim Acting Chief Executive Officer referred to the bus companies having asked for significant increases to continue to run supported bus services in May / June 2022 or they were going to stop them.

The Metro Mayor advised that the way in which we operate had changed. If there are extra passengers, then we are going to get the majority of the money. He noted that it was good to talk about the importance of buses, but it is necessary to match those words with resources.

#### **SOLACE report**

The Metro Mayor was questioned on what he thought the Combined Authority was for and whether the current arrangements could deliver or if a different Constitution were needed.

The Metro Mayor advised that the Combined Authority provided an opportunity for a strategic approach to challenges in the region, rather than a piecemeal focus on individual council areas which had not served residents well. He noted that all Metro Mayors and Combined Authorities had their own challenges because the Government had created a devolution that was not about giving power and resources to the CA but was instead about taking away from Local Authorities. He acknowledged that the Constitution could be improved.

Members felt that a pressing matter regarding how the Combined Authority works was the £1.4m allocated to Bath & North East Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council to deliver directly against infrastructure projects, whilst Bristol City Council was still in discussion on how it was going to deliver this. This demonstrated ongoing uncertainty about the organisational model for delivery.

Members commented that the Solace report mentioned the West of England working in partnership with Western Gateway, in particular in relation to the Severn tidal survey and railways. It was queried whether resources and support would be allocated to work with them on independent projects. It was noted that the Combined Authority's new office could provide a space to work collaboratively with Western Gateway.

The Metro Mayor noted that Western Gateway had something to offer but it did not bring resources. He wanted to also work with organisations who have resources like the Welsh Government, for example in relation to Housing.

Members asked the Metro Mayor about the progress with regards to housing. He advised that the Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) had stopped since agreement had not been found. In particular, South Gloucestershire Council wanted too small a number. He noted that housing needs to be strategically co-ordinated with job needs etc and that collective



	<p>leadership would be required to resolve the situation.</p> <p>At this point the Metro Mayor was thanked for his attendance by the Chair who also noted the Metro Mayor's 100% attendance record in the last two years. Members moved on to discuss the reports being considered at the 17 March 2023 West of England Combined Authority meeting as follows:</p>
7	<p><b>Review of items for 17 March 2023 West of England Combined Authority Committee</b></p> <p>The Committee discussed the following reports due to be considered by the West of England Combined Authority Committee at its meeting on 17 March 2023: Audit Action Plan: Feedback from Audit and Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committees and progress report; Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan 2023; and the West of England Combined Authority and Mayoral Budget Forecast Outturn 2022/2023.</p> <p>The comments made by the Committee were collated and circulated to members of the West of England Combined Authority Committee in advance of its meeting.</p> <p><b>Agenda Item 15. Audit Action Plan: Feedback from Audit and Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committees and progress report</b></p> <p>Cllr Geoff Gollop explained that Grant Thornton had produced a Value for Money report in November and officers had prepared an action plan. Audit Committee rejected this and a revised plan was submitted in December 2022, seeking advice on how to move forward. This was the first stage of the process.</p> <p>Solace have carried out their fact finding and summarised the challenges. For members' benefit, it was fair to say the Solace report and the extent of the issues raised were larger than potentially anticipated. Looking at the views from members, it was not anticipated that enough resources would be available to achieve what was being suggested. The positive response from officers in recognising the problems identified and trying to engage in finding solutions was welcomed. It was an ongoing problem that the leadership wanted to resolve in a constructive way.</p> <p>Cllr Steve Smith commented that the report was very good and covered a lot of issues. He said it was positive about the changes that the Interim Acting Chief Executive Officer had made. However, he was not convinced that the delivery of every item on the action plan would solve the problem. The fundamental purpose of the Combined Authority should be to drive strategy which in turn drives tactical decisions, but it does not have a strategy. What we have is a series of running battles on every decision that comes along. He was not convinced the Constitution being amended to require unanimity equipped the CA to deliver on a strategy either. He felt that the structure and the Constitution needed to be looked at to deliver on the potential there.</p> <p>Members expressed concerns about the time running out on North Somerset Council joining the Combined Authority. Operationally there were challenges though, such as relationships, the fate of the Local Enterprise Partnership, and elections. The Interim Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer) reminded members that most of the Constitution provisions were hard wired into the Order which would require parliamentary or Secretary of State consideration. This Order was probably the most restrictive of all on what was the relationship and functions of the CA, but even if consensus was obtained, we would still have to go back to Government to ask it to change the statutory arrangements.</p> <p>Members noted that financial reports needed to demonstrate how we achieve economic growth. Solace's report did not mention green or carbon recovery or how the Constitution balances these.</p>

The Interim Acting Chief Executive welcomed the Solace report and the further recommendations that would arise as it was all worked through. It presented a number of key areas requiring work, and the challenge was to determine how it would be resourced and who would lead. The Auditor had not commented on the action plan, and this was the first-time details had been put in since the 9 December 2022 meeting. He noted that Combined Authority officers would work closely with the officers in the UAs, in particular through the CEO's group. There had also been a first meeting of Mayors & Leaders with one representative from each local authority.

#### **Agenda item 10. Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan 2023**

The Head of Environment advised that this was a revision of the Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan which had first been published in 2022. It was more of a regional collaboration in the climate and ecological space, with good engagement, and the team had sought to make sure the actions were more measurable with a SMART approach. This allowed residents to hold the Combined Authority to account. It captured successes and achievements over the last year as well as an ambition to expand the role of the regional strategy to include climate resilience. Within the paper, authorisation was also being sought for additional funding through the Green Recovery Fund.

Members requested an update on JLTP4 mentioned in the report and commented that it was hugely ambitious but there was a funding shortfall. There were things that they would support on Metrobus to Yate, and some things within the plan were more long-term solutions.

The Head of Environment explained that, from his perspective in relation to the revision of JLTP4, the team were still waiting for clarity on what the update would require. It would be essential that it included decarbonisation of the transport system.

The Interim Strategic Director for Infrastructure advised guidelines were awaited but expected in the next 3-6 months. The team would then start consultation early in 2024.

Members felt that the map showing the flood areas in 2025 showed a very large flooding area all along the coast (both sides) and also a lot of North Somerset. They were concerned that the plan did not take into account the fact that there are already existing sea defences. For instance, It was not showing the protection for Oldbury on Severn, from Aust Cliffs and Avonmouth, and the raising of banks to give an extra 60 years of protection. There were currently no plans from Aust to Sharpness and this would need work and the banks would need to be raised. (Page 32 of the report).

Members asked that, in relation to Green Business, could more specificity be provided on (for example) low carbon fuels and renewable energy. Disappointment was expressed in relation to Share bike who did not want to carry on, it was not quite clear whether what was coming was a service that would be offered by the Combined Authority or another company. The Head of Environment confirmed that the team were looking for another company to provide this service.

Members noted that there was a hold on installing on-street residential lampposts. The Head of Environment confirmed that the team were getting closer to resolving this situation. The Interim Strategic Director for Infrastructure advised that a Full Business Case was being put to CEOs to discuss 250 ev-charging posts. The Combined Authority was currently in discussion with Bristol City Council on whether the CA should lead on that.

Members felt that they were not getting a sense of how much of what is going on will close the gap to 2030, and how much of that gap remains and what more would be required. The Head of Environment advised that in the narrative of the report it was clear that we are not

going to get there unless there was a dramatic change at a national level. He commented that a new data person had been appointed, part of whose role would be to look at how we communicate the gap in delivery.

Members were happy to see communications about tree canopy cover, given that it was difficult to put trees in streets. It was noted that there had been a Bristol City Council motion last year where free trees would be given to people to put in their front gardens, however this had not been actioned to-date.

It was noted that the workplace parking levy had been voted down in Bristol City Council last year. One of the issues was that businesses would relocate, so it would need to be a region-wide levy. The Head of Environment advised that the scheme had been notoriously difficult to implement across the country, and that it was about having a conversation as a region to open some of the doors.

He mentioned that one of the biggest assets for carbon capture were the moors which have locally shrunk by 0.5 metres so were absorbing less water. Members queried what actions could be taken to restore the moors for carbon capture and for wildlife as well. The Head of Environment said that the Strategy would identify areas and flood management, and it was a complicated but integrated conversation. He thought that having a regional strategy would help.

With the collapse of the SDS, members queried how Combined Authority officers were engaging with the Unitary Authorities on the drafting of Local Plans. The Head of Environment confirmed that his team had been consulted to ensure strategic themes were represented in the plans. The elements around the natural environment and planning the framework around these were key documents.

Members queried what the Combined Authority was doing as an organisation in terms of carbon intensity and having a carbon reduction plan. The Head of Environment explained that this was captured in the actions. The key part were big carbon contributions in infrastructure and how we build those pieces into investments. Consideration was also being given to training Combined Authority staff in carbon literacy so we could consider as an Authority how we embed the consideration of climate and carbon in what we do. It was suggested that an advisory Board, in addition to the existing Business/Skills and Transport/Planning & Housing Boards could be created to consider climate and ecological issues going forward. It was discussed and agreed that a Task and Finish group would be set up in the next few weeks to discuss various matters and this would be included.

#### **Agenda Item 14. West of England Combined Authority and Mayoral Budget Forecast Outturn 2022/2023**

Members agreed that the Task and Finish group should also discuss how the Committee would move forward on scrutinising the budget.

#### **Appendix 1**

Explanation of variance on Supported Bus Services budget 2022/23:

- The budget allocation for Supported Bus Services from the Transport Levy in 2022/23 was £3.059m.
- This budget reflected costs of the contracts operating during 2021/22 which would be subject to a re-tender exercise in early 2022 with a decision expected in April 2022 on contracts to be awarded from early September.
- Insufficient funding was available in the Transport Levy budget to cover a full year of

	<p>contracts in 2022/23.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Combined Authority Committee in June 2022 resolved to extend all contracts by 7 months from September and run a new tender exercise in late 2022 for new contracts from April 2023.</li> <li>• The cost of extending the contracts and replacing contracts that were handed back to us, as well as those covered when HCT folded, was £6.339m – this in part reflected the operators premium for the extension and needing to build in rising driver and fuel costs.</li> <li>• Whilst additional contract costs were incurred in switching net cost contracts to gross cost to accommodate the Fares Package #1 initiative from September 2022, this additional cost is covered by the Bus Service Improvement Plan funding allocation.</li> <li>• The figure of £9.32m in the paper is a gross spend against this budget line and will be reduced by around £2m once the S106, Bus Service Operator Grant and when our income from gross cost contracts is taken off.</li> <li>• The remaining overspend on the Supported Bus Services budget allocation will be offset largely by the underspend on Concessionary Fares which stands at around £3.5m currently.</li> </ul> <p>Note: The Combined Authority Transport team are working through projections for next year as the concessionary fares reimbursement rate has still to be finalised. When this work is complete, the team can then provide more information on the 2023/24 budget expectations.</p>
	Proposed date for next meeting: Monday, 12 June 2023

## Appendix 1

### Explanation of variance on Supported Bus Services budget 2022/23:

- The budget allocation for Supported Bus Services from the Transport Levy in 2022/23 was £3.059m.
- This budget reflected costs of the contracts operating during 2021/22 which would be subject to a re-tender exercise in early 2022 with a decision expected in April 2022 on contracts to be awarded from early September.
- Insufficient funding was available in the Transport Levy budget to cover a full year of contracts in 2022/23.
- The Combined Authority Committee in June 2022 resolved to extend all contracts by 7 months from September and run a new tender exercise in late 2022 for new contracts from April 2023.
- The cost of extending the contracts and replacing contracts that were handed back to us, as well as those covered when HCT folded, was £6.339m – this in part reflected the operators premium for the extension and needing to build in rising driver and fuel costs.
- Whilst additional contract costs were incurred in switching net cost contracts to gross cost to accommodate the Fares Package #1 initiative from September 2022, this additional cost is covered by the Bus Service Improvement Plan funding allocation.
- The figure of £9.32m in the paper is a gross spend against this budget line and will be reduced by around £2m once the S106, Bus Service Operator Grant and when our income from gross cost contracts is taken off.
- The remaining overspend on the Supported Bus Services budget allocation will be offset largely by the underspend on Concessionary Fares which stands at around £3.5m currently.

Note: The Combined Authority Transport team are working through projections for next year as the concessionary fares reimbursement rate has still to be finalised. When this work is complete, the team can then provide more information on the 2023/24 budget expectations.



**REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 8 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**REPORT TITLE: REGIONAL STRATEGY REFRESH**

**DIRECTOR: JESS LEE, HEAD OF STRATEGY & INNOVATION**

**AUTHOR: RACHEL PYKETT, HEAD OF POLICY**

## **Purpose of Report**

- 1 This report provides scrutiny with an update on the process underway to refresh the regional strategy.

## **Recommendation**

That the Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the approach being taken to the development of a refreshed regional strategy

## **Background / Issues for Consideration**

- 2 We are refreshing our regional strategy so we have a renewed articulation of our regional priorities and the outcomes we are seeking to deliver for people, communities and the region – tackling inequalities, addressing the climate and ecological emergency and evolving our economy for the good of all our residents. Having an up to date strategy for the region is an important tool in helping confirm our shared regional ambition; guide future decision making; and provide clarity to local partners and national and international investors about the opportunities across the West of England.
  - 2.1 The West of England last produced a regional strategy in 2019. The Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) was co-produced between the region and government and set a direction that drew on the region’s strengths and contributed to the ambition of the Government’s national Industrial Strategy.
  - 2.2 There has been significant national and regional change since the LIS was published. When Mayors and Leaders met earlier this year to discuss regional priorities, they agreed that a refresh of the regional strategy was needed – restating a collective vision for the region and guiding delivery and investment for the coming period.

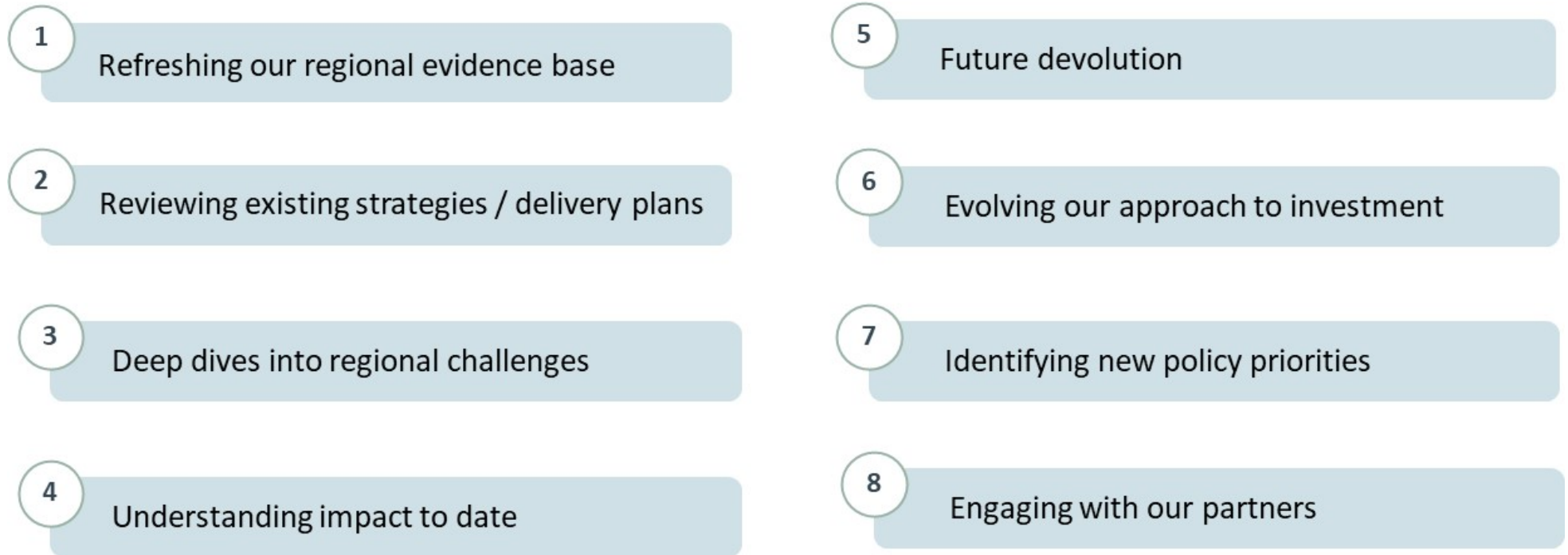
- 2.3 As one of the recommendations of the independent peer review of the Combined Authority undertaken by Solace, the regional strategy refresh sits within and is supporting the wider transformation programme that the Combined Authority is undertaking. The work is progressing in close collaboration between the Combined Authority and Unitary Authority officers and the regional CEOs group is acting as a steering board for the work.
- 2.4 As Figure 1 shows, it is anticipated that the regional strategy will set an overarching direction to guide the broader work of the region. It will provide the context for a range of delivery plans that will be developed or refreshed to ensure the vision set in the strategy is translated into clear implementation plans.
- 2.5 The refreshed strategy will also act as a guide to support future investment decisions and provide potential investors with a clear vision of regional priorities and opportunity.

**Figure 1: the role of the refreshed regional strategy**



- 2.6 To deliver the refreshed regional strategy, a number of workstreams are underway. As shown in Figure 2, workstreams range from a refresh of our regional evidence base, through to assessments of our impact to date, and incorporating work such as considering how we might evolve our approach to investment.

**Figure 2: workstreams underway to inform the regional strategy refresh**



- 2.7 The workstreams set out above are being progressed through a newly established regional strategy working group, bringing together CA and UA officers to deliver the work and keep the CEO steering group updated on progress.
- 2.8 The refreshed evidence base (workstream 1) was used to underpin the initial Mayors and Leaders discussion that concluded a refreshed regional strategy was required. The evidence base is being peer reviewed by a range of external bodies such as the Government Economic Service, Office for National Statistics, the Centre for Cities, and other leading think tanks. The evidence base is available online here: [West of England regional evidence base 2023](#).

- 2.9 The evidence base covers a wide range of areas (as set out in Figure 3), providing a robust assessment of the strengths and challenges of the region.

### Figure 3: areas covered in the West of England regional evidence base 2023

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*We have produced an overview of how our region is developing, highlighting where we have strengths and opportunities to build on and where we have challenges to address. The evidence base is not exhaustive, but provides a guide to assist decision making on how we help the region continue to evolve*

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#### **1: Quality of life**

This section looks at macro-economic trends, regional challenges and strengths that are impacting quality of life for people across the region

#### **2: Our environment**

This section sets out the scale of the challenge we face in delivering on our climate and ecological commitments. It highlights areas we will need tackle to reverse or mitigate the impact of climate change

#### **3: Our places**

This section looks at the issues fundamental to creating places people want to (and afford to) live: housing; town and city centre development

#### **4: Our people**

This section looks at the people that make up this region and the demographic changes we are experiencing

#### **5: Jobs & training**

This section looks at our employment landscape, skills across the region and how people are progressing in their careers (or where further action is needed to help people progress)

#### **6: Economic growth & innovation**

This section looks at the economic strengths and opportunities we have to develop our region further to develop new jobs and opportunities for people. It also highlights areas where further focus is needed to unlock opportunity.

#### **7: Connecting people and places**

This section looks at the digital and transport connectivity strengths and challenges we need to address to connect as many people as possible across the region



2.10 The regional evidence base is wide ranging and highlights that while many of the conclusions reached about the strengths of the region during the production of the LIS hold true, there are growing areas of challenge that we should seek to address. It concludes:

- The economic outlook remains challenging, but we have some real assets that improve quality of life for people living here. The region is attractive to visitors and residents: our population is growing at a faster rate than the national average
- Carbon emissions must fall sharply to hit our net zero goals, with action across society including retrofitting over 250,000 homes and building renewable power sources
- Wildlife in the region is declining, and with temperatures likely to rise by 1.7-3.9°C by the 2050s, we need to build resilience into infrastructure, homes and businesses, and the environment
- The region's cultural assets and green spaces make our communities good places to live, but housing is increasingly unaffordable and many local high streets are struggling
- Residents are highly qualified (52% at NVQ 4+) and we have an excellent skills pipeline with four strong universities. But there are challenges with school outcomes for young people
- And some residents cannot access decent living standards: almost 50,000 residents are unemployed or inactive but want work, and employment is 12% lower among minority ethnic groups than in the white population, and 23% lower among those with disabilities than those without. And there are significant inequalities in health outcomes
- The region has a diverse mix of businesses across a range of knowledge-intensive industries, and high levels of innovation. But productivity is slipping behind the national average (5% behind in 2021), which holds back wages and living standards
- Public transport use is recovering following the pandemic, but carbon emissions and congestion both remain high, hampering people from the journeys they need to make for work and leisure.

2.13 The next phase of work to deliver a regional strategy will be the development of an initial discussion document, drawing on the conclusions of work to date. This will provide a route to update Mayors and Leaders on progress in the strategy development and seek their guidance on potential priorities and areas for action they would like to see prioritised. Further engagement with partners across the region will also take place to help refine the work and ensure there is a joint commitment to the direction the strategy ultimately sets. Figure 6 provides scrutiny committee with an overview of action to date and anticipated next steps in this programme of work.

**Figure 6: progress to date and next steps in the strategy development process**



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**REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

**REPORT TITLE: TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE  
WORKSTREAM UPDATE**

**DIRECTOR: DANIEL DICKINSON, INTERIM MONITORING  
OFFICER**

**AUTHOR: DANIEL DICKINSON**

## **Purpose of Report**

1. To update the committee on progress with the actions in the governance workstream of the Transformation Programme

## **Recommendation**

That the report be noted.

## **Reasons for recommendation**

To comply with the request arising at the 7 July 2023 informal meeting of Scrutiny members.

## **Background / Issues for Consideration**

2. At an informal meeting of Scrutiny on 7 July 2023, it was proposed that 3 additional meetings would take place, providing an opportunity for deep dives on some key themes. This paper on the governance workstream of the transformation programme was one such deep dive.
3. Regular updates on the progress of the transformation programme are timetabled for all Combined Authority Committee (CAC) meetings.
4. This report builds on and updates the governance workstream element of the report to CAC.

### Workstream 3 – Governance and Structures

5. Figure 1 provides an overview of actions in the governance and structures workstream. As noted in the update, a number of the actions that fit within this workstream were completed before the transformation programme was established.

**Figure 1: governance and structures workstream**

Action No.	Action	Activity Planned	Key dates
GS1	<b>Following discussions on the role and purpose of the CA, develop revised West of England Combined Authority operating principles</b> as part of revisions to the Constitution of the West of England Combined Authority. Have regard to the Constitutions of other CAs as revisions are made. In reviewing the Constitution, revise the scheme of delegations.	Whilst a more substantive overhaul of the Constitution will take place following the outcome of the role and purpose discussions, there is an intention to propose some constitutional changes to the October Combined Authority Committee. The proposed changes are summarised in more detail below and are considered to offer a considerable improvement to core operating principles of the Combined Authority in line with this action.	Interim changes are to be proposed to the October Combined Authority Committee. A more substantive overhaul will take place in light of the outcome of the role and purpose discussions
GS2	<b>Establish a set of meetings with the purpose of enhancing ownership and collaboration of the agenda and the West of England Combined Authority.</b> Committees to have clear ToR, forward timetable and training programme to support implementation. This work should be independently supported	With specific regard to the actions around clear terms of reference for committees, forward plans, training and independent support for these processes, this piece of work is well underway.  There is a separate paper on the Scrutiny Committee agenda which provides more detail in respect of that committee. That work will also bring similar benefits into the work of the Audit Committee as this approach will deal with potential overlaps between the two committees and is anticipated to result in a terms of reference review.	Scrutiny and Audit Workshops through the autumn with any necessary constitutional changes anticipated to be taken to January Committee
GS3	<b>Consider assigning Leader portfolios and CEO portfolios to support Leaders.</b>	Through discussions on role and purpose of the West of England Combined Authority, the question of Leader portfolios can be considered as and when appropriate.	TBC - Following role and purpose discussions
GS4	<b>West of England Combined Authority officers will ensure Cabinet Members from UAs can request briefings from senior CA officers as required</b>	The Combined Authority Chief Executive has offered briefings to all Local Authority member portfolio holders in advance of committee meetings.	<b>ACTION COMPLETE</b>
GS5	<b>Regional Monitoring Officers will meet regularly</b> to discuss matters regarding the constitution that need addressing	The CA's Monitoring Officer has established a programme of meetings with the Monitoring Officers from its four partner UAs. These are intended to take place at least monthly and a series of 121 introductory meetings took place	Implemented and Ongoing

		in July. These meetings are not restricted to discussions on constitutional matters but provide an opportunity to identify and resolve emerging issues across the board. In addition, contacts have been established with other senior legal managers and similar relevant personnel on an inter-authority basis for the same purposes, and to explore opportunities for collaborative working on legal matters across joint projects. In addition, the CA's Monitoring Officer meets regularly with the other M10 Monitoring Officers to share knowledge and best practice on matters affecting Combined Authorities generally.	
<b>GS6</b>	Following the 2023 local elections, <b>highlight the opportunity of joining the Audit and Scrutiny Committees to UA members.</b>	Material will be provided to new members as part of their induction process and all members will be offered the opportunity to meet with CA officers to discuss the role of Audit and Scrutiny Committees	Complete. Also, see GS2 above.

6. The West of England Combined Authority Action Plan, following the Grant Thornton external audit report, agreed a range of specific actions associated with agreement of a new protocol covering when legal advice can be sought. These actions have all been completed and a constitutional amendment was approved by Committee in March 2023.
7. As noted above, other actions associated with this workstream which are about improving working practices (i.e. briefing cabinet members, regular meetings of the regional Monitoring Officers group) have been taken forward and are now part of our ongoing approach to working across the West of England Combined Authority partnership, and across the wider M10 network.
8. At the steering group for the transformation programme, the CEOs have agreed that a number of the actions set out in Figure 1 will be taken forward following discussions on the role and purpose of the West of England Combined Authority.
9. In terms of the constitutional changes to be proposed at the October meeting of the Combined Authority Committee, these are intended to standardise the way in which the delegation of powers to officers to implement committee decisions operate.
10. The standardised approach would make clear that officers are empowered to take all reasonably necessary steps to implement the decisions of the Combined Authority Committee. It would provide a standardised process which would strike the correct balance between enabling operational efficiency and freedom for decisions and actions to be taken at the most proportionate level, ensure that appropriate UA colleagues are involved, and provide a standard

escalation procedure if consensus between UA and CA officers cannot be reached.

11. The process will involve shaping the proposals through the UA/CA CEOs meetings as well as through the UA/CA MOs meetings considering detailed proposed drafting, before being taken through the October Scrutiny and Combined Authority Committee process.

### **Risk Management/Assessment**

12. No specific risks identified.

### **Public Sector Equality Duties**

13. No specific PSED duties are engaged.

### **Climate Change Implications**

14. Not directly relevant.

### **Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:**

15. Not directly relevant.

### **Legal Implications:**

16. None arising.

### **Human Resources Implications:**

17. None arising.

### **Land/property Implications**

18. None arising.

### **Appendices:**

*List any appendices to the report:*

None

### **Background papers:**

Solace and Grant Thornton reports and previous updates to Committees.



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**REPORT TO:** WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY  
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023

**REPORT TITLE:** OPERATION OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE

**DIRECTOR:** DANIEL DICKINSON, INTERIM MONITORING  
OFFICER

**AUTHOR:** MARK WAKEFIELD (HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC  
SERVICES) & JILL BENNETT (DEMOCRATIC  
SERVICES AND SCRUTINY MANAGER)

## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To set out proposals and options to inform a discussion on the future operation of the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) function.

### Recommendation

1.2 That Members of the O&S Committee discuss and agree the proposals around their forward work plan, ways of working and the committee's relationship to other boards and organisations.

### Reasons for recommendation

1.3 The new Committee Members have asked for proposals to be brought forward to ensure the Committee is operating an effective scrutiny function on behalf of the Combined Authority.

## 2. Background

2.1 The May 2023 local elections and the Combined Authority Committee AGM have returned new Members and proposed Chair/Vice Chair arrangements for the Committee. At an informal meeting of O&S Members and Officers on 7 July 2023, Members discussed how they would like to see O&S operating in the forthcoming term. There was a discussion around:-

a) the potential for additional scrutiny meetings to be added to the programme

- b) effective scrutiny work programming and forward planning, along with scrutiny Member attendance at Advisory Boards
- c) reviewing the current arrangements in place for report preparation and circulation
- d) linking into best practice in the constituent unitary authorities and other combined authorities
- e) drawing on external resource to help train members and develop the Combined Authority's scrutiny function, with particular emphasis on understanding the delineation between Scrutiny and Audit

2.2 Since the 7 July meeting, Officers have met with Cllr Plowden, on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee, to further explore and develop these themes. This report goes on to provide further information for discussion in each of these areas.

### **3. Additional scrutiny meetings**

- 3.1 It has been agreed that in addition to the 4 "ordinary" programmed meetings of the Committee, 3 additional meetings would be facilitated to allow "deep dives" into thematic issues.
- 3.2 At the informal meeting on 7 July 2023, it was proposed that the 3 additional meetings could focus on governance, the Regional Strategy refresh, ecology/net zero and programme delivery.
- 3.3 This meeting, on 8 September 2023 is the first of those 3 additional meetings and includes papers to update members on the work underway to refresh the Regional Strategy and on progress against the governance workstream of the Transformation Programme.
- 3.4 Members are asked to consider the programming and scope of the other 2 additional meetings, bearing in mind the need for officers to be able to properly plan and resource the same if the meetings are to operate to best effect.

### **4. Forward planning and Advisory Board attendance**

- 4.1 As resolved at the CA Committee, an indicative forward plan of decisions and business to be brought forward to the CA Committee was published on the 8th June 2023. This is available at Annex 1. This plan is kept under review as milestones do change due to the complexity of some of the projects. It will be published at regular intervals.
- 4.2 The Committee is recommended to use this forward plan to develop a scrutiny programme. The proposed workshops should also assist in formulating an approach to forward planning the scrutiny work programme.
- 4.3 In addition to the 3 additional "themed" scrutiny meetings, the Committee will

continue to receive reports destined for the Combined Authority Committee and Joint Committee and so will have the opportunity to review all reports and prepare a statement to be made in person at the Combined Authority Committee and Joint Committee itself. The issue raised in respect of the timing of report preparation and circulation is addressed below.

4.4 In terms of scrutiny member attendance at the Combined Authority’s Advisory Boards, O&S Members have a standing invitation to attend the advisory boards. Constitutional arrangements are available here: [Constitution](#)

4.5 The Combined Authority’s on-line calendar of meetings can be consulted to ascertain when formal committee meetings fall, but the table below summarises the position and includes meetings of the Advisory Boards. Members may wish to review the meeting cycle going forward to assist in forward planning scrutiny work including nominating members to attend Advisory Boards in an observational capacity.

O&S CA Reports	O&S Deep Dive	B&S Board	PH&T Board	Audit
			4 Sept	
		7 Sep		
	8 Sep			
				18 Sep
2 Oct				
				15 Nov
				4 Dec
			8 Jan	
		11 Jan		
	15 Jan			
22 Jan				
			19 Feb	
		22 Feb		
				4 Mar
11 Mar				

## 5. Reviewing the current arrangements for report preparation and circulation

5.1 Currently, the operational practice for the ordinary O&S meetings is for those meetings to consider the business programmed for the meetings of the Combined Authority Committee and the Joint Committee that follow immediately afterwards. This sequence often means that the papers for those two committees have already been published by the time the O&S committee meets. O&S observations are then fed into the two subsequent committees through a standing agenda item at those committees for those purposes.

5.2 Discussions at the 7 July meeting and since have surfaced a desire for papers for the regular O&S meetings to be circulated to O&S Members 10 clear working days before the meeting rather than the usual 5 clear days set out in statute. Officers are currently working through the implications of this approach given the impacts

this would have on current deadlines in the drafting, clearance and briefing process. It may be that settled practice on this point is best emerging from the scrutiny development workshops discussed later in this report.

## **6. Linking into external best practice**

- 6.1 Significant progress can be reported on this action. The Combined Authority's newly appointed Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager has begun to make connections with her counterparts in all of the other "M10" Combined Authorities as well as the four Unitary Authorities within the West of England footprint. The establishment of this regular networking opportunity will enable the sharing of best practice on how to most effectively operate a scrutiny function in areas serviced by a Combined/Unitary regional/local government structure.
- 6.2 This work is particularly important and timely given the relatively recent emergence of the first edition of DLUHC's English Devolution Accountability Framework, part of which will include a Scrutiny Protocol. The M10 scrutiny network will provide an important opportunity to engage with DLUHC on the Protocol as it navigates the process of Ministerial clearance.
- 6.3 It is intended that the creation of a network at Officer level will open up opportunities for a similar network and Member/Chair level to ensure that experiences of best practice can be shared from both the Member and Officer dimension. This work will complement the scrutiny development workshop programme discussed below.

## **7. External Workshop Support**

- 7.1 As discussed at the informal meeting on 7 July, Officers have liaised with staff from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to devise support for Members in exploring and arriving at best practice in operating the scrutiny function.
- 7.2 The CfGS will deliver a presentation at this meeting on the vital role of Scrutiny, and what its primary duties and responsibilities are. Further support will be sought out from either the CfGS and/or the Local Government Association (LGA) which typically takes the form of a workshop or series of workshops led by both an Officer and Member peer.
- 7.3 These further workshops offer an opportunity to discuss practice in the Combined Authority and explore best practice elsewhere, recognising that each organisation is unique, and needs to tailor its scrutiny function to meet its own particular needs and objectives. This work can often lead to helpful refinements in operational practice and in developing personal skills sets which facilitate more effective and added value scrutiny.
- 7.4 It may be opportune to also explore with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Chair of the Audit Committee as to whether a similar offer is available and would be of interest with regards to the work of the Audit Committee, as it is important that both committees have distinct and clearly

understood roles and terms of reference.

7.5 The intention would be to offer access to any sessions across the membership of the two committees to maximise the opportunity for Member input, learning and development.

## **8. Risk Management/Assessment**

8.1 There are no specific risk management issues arising from the content of this report.

## **9. Public Sector Equality Duties**

9.1 There are no specific PSED considerations arising from the content of this report.

## **10. Climate Change Implications**

10.1 There are no specific climate change implications, but it will be noted that additional time has been made in the programme to accommodate an environment themed scrutiny deep-dive which will assist in achieving the Combined Authority's priorities in this regard.

## **11. Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:**

11.1 The implications arising under this heading are principally related to the officer resource required to support an increased scrutiny programme and any resulting changes to scrutiny practice, which are all currently anticipated to be absorbed within recently approved budget allocations. Steps have already been taken to increase officer resource to support this area of the Authority's operations.

11.2 However, very careful consideration of the impacts on officer resource will have to be given as any new proposals develop, to ensure that providing enhanced support to the scrutiny function does not divert resource to the detriment of operational delivery, and in particular to the time constraints under which officers operate to generate reports.

## **12. Legal Implications:**

12.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the content of this report. Care will be taken to ensure emerging practice remains compliant with evolving legal requirements and statutory guidance applicable to the scrutiny function.

## **13. Human Resources Implications:**

13.1 These are referred to above under the financial resources implications sections.

## 14. Land/property Implications

14.1 Not applicable.

### Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Combined Authority Committee Forward Plan

### Background papers:

N/A

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## **Appendix 1**

### **West of England Combined Authority Committee and West of England Joint Committee – Draft Forward Plan 2023/24**

Publication date:

Updated: 23 Aug 2023

The draft Forward Plan seeks to anticipate (as far as possible) the decisions to be made by the West of England Combined Authority Committee and West of England Joint Committee during the 2023/24 municipal year.

The Forward Plan is updated regularly and can be viewed on the West of England Combined Authority website.

The Forward Plan aims to go beyond the minimum legal requirement for notice of key decisions to be published at least 28 days in advance of the decision-taking meeting. For all meetings, a formal agenda will be published at a minimum of 5 clear working days before the meeting.

This update covers the meetings of the West of England Combined Authority Committee and Joint Committee scheduled to be held on the following dates during the 2023-24 municipal year:

\* 06 October 2023

\* 26 January 2024

\* 15 March 2024

#### **Indicative agenda items scheduled for remainder of 2023/24**

##### **06 October 2023 meeting**

##### **West of England Combined Authority Committee**

1. Combined Authority & Mayoral Budget Forecast
2. Audit Committee Annual Report
3. Senior/Statutory Officer Appointments
4. Transformation Programme Update
5. Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan Update
6. CRSTS Re-Baselining

7. Adult Education Budget 24/25
8. Skills Bootcamps Delegations
9. Bristol Temple Quarter – Approvals and delegations for delivery
10. Supported bus funding principles
11. Future4WEST Strategic Outline Case and approval of next steps
12. Draw Down Filton Station funding

#### **West of England Joint Committee**

1. IBB Review
2. LEP Future Governance
3. LEP Budget Forecast

#### **26 January 2024 meeting**

#### **West of England Combined Authority Committee**

1. Combined Authority & Mayoral Budget Setting
2. Capital Strategy Including Treasury Management Update
3. Transformation Programme
4. Strategic Rail Pipeline
5. Electric Vehicle Strategy
6. Somer Valley Links – Approval of Outline Business Case
7. Metrowest 1 Funding/Approval to submit Full Business Case to DfT
8. Engagement and Consultation on Walking & Cycling Investment Plan

#### **West of England Joint Committee**

4. LEP Budget Setting

#### **15 March 2024 meeting**

#### **West of England Combined Authority Committee**

1. Combined Authority & Mayoral Budget Forecast
2. Transformation Programme
3. Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan Update and 2024 Revision
4. Bath Riverside Outline Business Case
5. M32 Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case
6. Bristol/Bath Strategic Corridor Outline Business Case
7. Joint Local Transport Plan Consultation
8. Metrowest 2 Full Business Case