

AGENDA ITEM 10

JOINT MEETING - WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE & WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE

4 DECEMBER 2020

COMMENTS FROM COMBINED AUTHORITY BOARDS

Meetings of the Combined Authority Boards were held during November 2020 as follows:

- * Planning & Housing Board - 2 November 2020
- * Transport Board - 4 November 2020
- * Skills Board - 9 November
- * Business Board - 12 November 2020

A summary of comments from the Boards specifically about items included on the 4 December joint meeting committee agenda is set out below:

STRATEGIC RAIL INVESTMENT (agenda item 11)

Comments from the Transport Board:

- * The Transport Board was briefed in detail on the proposed adoption of the 10 Year Rail Delivery Programme and the programme of schemes forming the basis for future rail investment in the West of England area, noting that it was also proposed that clear delegations be put in place to support the budget and contractual requirements to deliver the rail capital programmes.
- * The Board supported the proposals, commenting that it would be important to meet the challenges, with partners, around delivering rail schemes on time and on budget. It was noted that all project and commercial risks were established in risk registers for each project.

INVESTMENT FUND (agenda item 15)

Comments from the Planning & Housing Board:

*** Spatial Development Strategy:**

The Board was updated on the revised Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) timetable and the associated budget review, noting that the costs for the full scope of the work had now been established. The Board supported the proposal that a further £2.5m from the existing tail allocation from the Investment Fund be approved, £1.5m of which was needed to progress the next key phases of work including plan preparation, consultation and examination stages together with anticipated examination inspector and venue costs; and £1m of which is from the allocated MRT tail of funding and will support the necessary transport work. The Board also supported the revised timetable for the SDS,

noting that this makes provision for more time to plan preparation, delaying consultation to Autumn 2021, but retaining submission to the Secretary of State in Spring 2022, enabling an Inspectors' report to be expected in early 2023 and publication (adoption) as soon as possible thereafter. The Board noted that this was in line with the end date of the original programme, enabling Local Plans to be submitted and subject to examination (and potentially adoption) in 2023.

*** Green Infrastructure:**

The Board was updated on the proposals around the £3m of funding earmarked to support Green Infrastructure proposals, noting that these were as follows:

- WaterSpace/Avon Corridor: A programme of work to the green spaces and rights of way along the River Avon and Bristol Harbour corridor between Bitton and Avon Gorge. Works include the Summerdale footbridge at Hanham Lock, upgrading paths and improving access links.
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Link: This landscape programme would deliver on the benefits and options of achieving links between the Cotswolds and Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty for wildlife and people. As the approach was developed, it would deliver increased public access, wildlife connectivity, community engagement, sustainable water management and support land-use planning and land management decisions.
- Common Connections: This would deliver a rich Green Infrastructure landscape that protected key natural heritage in the east fringe in South Gloucestershire and provide better quality, better connected and better accessed GI for people and wildlife.

The Board noted that the first of these Full Business Cases, for the Chew Valley Lake Recreational Trail, had been submitted by B&NES seeking £1.006m from the Investment Fund towards the £1.607m project cost. The Board supported the proposal for the WECA Committee to approve the Full Business Case for the Chew Valley Lake Recreational Trail subject to resolution of land issues and planning conditions, the supply of the detailed programme and the confirmation of the final costs.

Comments from the Transport Board:

Future Transport Zone:

* The Board was updated on progress on the Future Transport Zone (FTZ) projects and noted that work was being taken forward to:

- deliver initial stages of all 5 FTZ projects using the authority's Professional Services Framework.
- start recruiting for programme roles and launch strategic procurement tasks with early market engagement.
- establish stakeholder groups for each project.

* The Board was supportive of the proposed Investment Fund allocation of £3.655m as Future Transport Zone match funding.

ADULT EDUCATION BUDGET – APPROACH FOR THE 2021/22 ACADEMIC YEAR (agenda item 16)

Comments from the Skills Board:

* The Skills Board was briefed in detail on the proposed approach for the management and administration of the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) for the 2021/22 academic year.

* It was noted that the overall aim was to orientate the local Adult Education system so that it was focused on, and responsive to the specific needs of the region's residents, communities, employers and the local economy as a whole. The proposal was to use the 2021/22 academic year to complete the move away from the transitional approach started in the 2019/20 academic year. This would see changes which would support delivery of the West of England Local Industrial Strategy and associated Employment & Skills Plan. For 2021/22, the Combined Authority would use a commissioning approach to devolved Adult Education. This would include the use of a Commissioning Strategy and underlying commissioning evidence base. This would support providers in focusing on priority sub-regional groups of residents/communities, employers/sectors and geographies within the Combined Authority area.

* The Board was supportive of the approach and noted that a full Equalities Impact Assessment would be conducted as part of the funding process prior to the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

