

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

Wednesday, 7 October 2020, 10:30 am

Zoom virtual meeting, broadcast via the WECA YouTube channel

Present:

Cllr Brian Allinson, South Gloucestershire Council	Cllr Geoff Gollop, Bristol City Council
Cllr James Arrowsmith, South Gloucestershire Council	Cllr Gary Hopkins, Bristol City Council
Cllr John Ashe, South Gloucestershire Council	Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council
Cllr Stephen Clarke, Bristol City Council, Chair	Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Winston Duguid, Bath and North East Somerset Council	Cllr Mhairi Threlfall, Bristol City Council

North Somerset councillor representatives:

Cllr Mike Bird, Cllr Peter Crew, Cllr Huw James

Officers in Attendance:

Ian Hird, Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager
Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Jess Lee, Head of Strategy & Policy
Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services

Apologies:

Cllr Carole Johnson, Bristol City Council

Minutes

1	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting which was being held via Zoom.
2	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Carole Johnson.
3	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST No declarations of interest were declared.
4	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

5	<p>ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS; STATEMENTS; PETITIONS)</p> <p>The following questions had been received from members of the public for this meeting and the replies had been circulated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Question from: Suzanne Audrey - Park & Stride 2. Questions from: Christina Biggs - Rail projects <p>One statement had also been received and the member of the public attended the meeting and addressed the Committee thereon:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christina Biggs / Tony Lloyd - Transport / rail issues
6	<p>CHAIR'S BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority, Mayor Tim Bowles attended the meeting to address the meeting and to answer Members' questions on the Recovery Plan and Climate Emergency Action Plan.</p> <p>The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor stated that the two plans were intrinsically linked and an important part of the Combined Authority's work going forward in the present, medium and longer term; • It was important that as many sectors feed into the work as possible so that a regional response could be found and a stronger voice for the region could be heard by central government; • Significant work had taken place around skills and business support and significant investment to support businesses continued; • The Workforce for the Future programme would be vital to help SMEs going forward; • A multi-agency rapid redundancy support programme was in place; • Combined Authority Mayors had been lobbying for more funds to support skills; • The Climate Emergency Action Plan had been coproduced by officers across the authorities and built on the work each UA had been doing individually but individuals and businesses also had their own roles to play; • There was also plenty of work going on in other sectors that would contribute to the carbon neutral targets, such as cycling and walking investments, e-scooter trials and private business innovation; • In response to a question on cycling investment compared to other Combined Authorities, it was noted that huge investment in cycling and walking was taking place, and conversations with other Combined Authority Mayors were happening constantly; • In response to a question on how the goals in the Climate Emergency Action Plan would be measured, it was noted that over the next six months, officers would incorporate evidence from different plans to establish realistic base levels in order that realistic targets could be set; • In response to a question, it was noted that the work around the Local Industrial Strategy would constantly be reviewed as well as the understanding of challenges of local businesses, trading focus, inward investment and seeking out key global markets; • It was asked whether enforcement of dangerous cycling activity could be carried out. It was noted that the Combined Authority was working closely with police regarding the e-scooter trial. Cycling on pavements continued to be illegal. The Mayor called for individuals to act responsibly; • The Combined Authority had put in bids to feed into the impending Devolution White Paper but it was important to show government that the monies being received were

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being used responsibly and effectively; • The Combined Authority deals with cross-border/wider issues so it can develop projects across the region in the medium and longer term, and secure funding from government. • In discussion, members suggested that investment in the hydrogen economy and decarbonisation of transport were priorities. <p>The Chair thanked the Mayor for his attendance and asked whether this could be made a reasonably regular slot on the agenda. The Committee asked that SMART goals be included in the Climate Emergency Action Plan and reflect the current transport programme thinking, given a large percentage of emissions come from transport. The report was broadly welcomed, however and it was noted that the targets were more stringent than national targets, especially the key target of achieving net zero carbon by 2030.</p> <p>Agreed: That the Committee’s comments be submitted to the WECA Committee’s meeting on 9 October 2020 to be considered as part of that Committee’s decision-making process (see appendix 1).</p>
7	<p>REVIEW OF 9 OCTOBER WECA COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE REPORTS</p> <p>The Committee considered the reports to be considered by the WECA Committee and Joint Committee meeting on 9 October 2020. Malcolm Coe, the Director of Investment and Corporate Services gave a summary on the finance reports. The following issues were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Growth Fund had to be fully spent by March 2021 and has been deliberately overprogrammed to avoid any repayment. The successor Getting Building Fund would be used to meet the overprogramming of existing projects. • Regarding the Metrowest Stage 2 development costs, the LGF allocations seemed to ‘fall away’ instead of increasing. This was due to the overall MetroWest project being funded through a number of different sources; • The enabling works funding for Temple Quarter is from the Economic Development Fund (EDF), part of Bristol’s allocation. The documentation for the scheme was included in the report. Each milestone would be considered by the appropriate decision-making processes; • Umbrella Scheme 1 and 2 were confirmed as 5G technology projects in South Gloucestershire; • UAs had had pressures on their revenue finances due to the Covid-19 crisis but the Combined Authority had largely not had any significant effect on their funding streams at the moment. There was a projected slight underspend at the end of the financial year; • The proposal was to set up a Development Infrastructure Fund (DIF) to allocate monies to development sites (from the investment programme headroom). This would aid longer-term projects and public-sector land cash flow with extant planning permissions; • An extra £4.4m for targeted economy recovery was proposed to be allocated to the Recovery Taskforce work; • The Adult Education Budget had a small increase in the fund (for sector based work academies and high level qualifications) but all Combined Authorities were lobbying government for extra allocations in this area; • The Land Acquisition Fund criteria could be circulated. <p>Agreed: That the Chair, in consultation with the Scrutiny Manager, circulate a draft of the comments made by the Committee to be submitted by the Chair to the meeting to the WECA</p>

Committee and Joint Committee at its meeting on 9 October 2020 as part of that Committee's decision-making process. (see appendix 1 below)

APPENDIX 1

COMMENTS FROM COUNCILLOR STEPHEN CLARKE, CHAIR OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS SUBMITTED TO:

JOINT MEETING OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE – 9 OCTOBER 2020

Following our meeting on 7 October, I wish to raise the following matters on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Covid Recovery Plan and Climate Emergency Action Plan (agenda item 11)

We were pleased to welcome Mayor Bowles to our meeting to discuss these items and would extend an invitation to him to attend future meetings on a reasonably regular basis as we found the engagement helpful.

In broad terms we welcome both the Recovery Plan and the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Recovery Plan:

We welcome the breadth and ambition of the plan, and the specific detail of the actions to be taken forward, as developed through the Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce, with the full involvement of the region's local authorities and the business and other communities.

Climate Emergency Action Plan:

We also broadly welcome the Climate Emergency Action Plan and recognise the clear structure of the plan. We particularly welcome the headline ambition to achieve net zero carbon in the region by 2030, which is significantly ahead of the 2050 national target. We also acknowledge the work of officers and the engagement and partnership working that has taken place across the authorities in developing the action plan.

We would though like to draw attention to the following issues that we feel should be fully taken on board in taking actions forward:

* It will be important to ensure the development of a suite of SMART (Specific; Measurable; Attainable; Relevant; Timed) targets as an integral part of the action plan. It is critical to define goals and establish clear milestones against which progress and success can be measured and demonstrated.

* There will need to be clarity about how taking forward these actions will be factored into / linked in with the evidence base that will inform the review of key strategies, plans and projects, e.g. the Local Industrial Strategy, the next Joint Local Transport Plan and future investment in sustainable transport.

* Given the twin 'drivers' of facilitating economic recovery and tackling the climate emergency, it will be essential to build on the region's acknowledged strengths around innovation and technology by maximising investment opportunities (e.g. around the hydrogen economy and clean technologies) that will bring both economic and environmental benefit.

	<p>2. Investment Fund (agenda item 15)</p> <p>We noted the latest report and the fact that £32.2m of headroom has been identified in the programme to 2022/23 as a result of the detailed review of scheme deliverability. We note that detailed proposals for the reallocation of funding from this headroom are to be presented to the Committee's next meeting in December and are supportive of the proposal that a significant part of this funding, approx. £20-£25m, will be used to create a Development Infrastructure Fund.</p> <p>3. WECA and North Somerset</p> <p>We wish to bring to the committee's attention our strong view that it would be beneficial to the region for North Somerset Council to join WECA, as it is clear to us that that the Combined Authority should align with the West of England's functional economic area. We encourage all Mayors and Leaders to do everything possible to bring this about in discussion with government so that these arrangements are in place in advance of the 2021 WECA Mayoral election.</p> <p>Cllr. Stephen Clarke Chair, West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee</p>
8	<p>INFORMATION ITEM - FORWARD PLAN FOR WECA COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE</p> <p>The Forward Plan was noted.</p>
	<p>The next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 2 December 2020.</p>