

WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 JUNE 2021

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The following questions were submitted by the deadline:

Question 1 – submitted by David Redgewell

Subject: Bus Back Better

With the Department for Transport publishing the Bus Back Better strategy and instructing local Transport Authorities such as the West of England Combined Authority and North Somerset council to improve bus services through enhanced quality partnerships or quality contracts, what progress is being made on this submission to the buses minister Baroness Vere of Norbiton, and setting up a Bus advisory panel and reinstating a public transport users forum by Mayor Norris, as zoom or an in person meeting and to discuss this issue with the Bristol Mayor's Transport board?

REPLY:

A report is being presented to the West of England Combined Authority and Joint Committee on 25 June giving details of the response of the West of England CA and North Somerset Council to the National Bus Strategy. It has been published at [Agenda for Joint meeting - West of England Combined Authority Committee and West of England Joint Committee on Friday, 25th June, 2021, 11.15 am - West of England Combined Authority \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

We are working to a very challenging timescale to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for submission to Government by 31 October 2021. Our BSIP will include the outline of a Passengers' Charter and we will follow the guidance published by Government on how to give bus passengers more of a voice and a say.

Question 2 – submitted by David Redgewell

Subject: Bristol ring road

Why is West of England Combined Authority and South Gloucestershire council going out to public consultation on the roundabout junction improvements schemes on the Bristol Ring road with the consultation making very little if any reference to the importance of walking and cycling and improving bus lanes or priority measures in view of the West of England mayoral transport bus strategy wanting to improve orbital bus services in East

Bristol and Kingswood part of which will use the ring road? - and the need to improve air quality around Bromley Heath, Warmley and Kingswood. At the following roundabouts Lyde Green, Rosary Roundabout, Deanery Road and Kingsfield Roundabout - Especially in view of the reference to such important policy in Bus Back Better, the Government White paper, on improvements to bus service and gear change the Government policy document on walking and cycling, and Great Britain railways with station near to the Ring road at Keynsham Filton Abbey wood and Bristol parkway. *Will Mayor Norris, Mayor Rees and the council leaders Toby Savage, South Gloucestershire Council, B&NES leader Kevin Guy and Don Davies, North Somerset council review this policy in line with government guidance on integrated transport policy and the original scheme proposed by the western gateway transport board.*

REPLY:

South Gloucestershire Council has launched a 12 week consultation on the proposed A4174 junction improvement scheme. The council has investigated options to improve the layout of five junctions on the A4174 Ring Road between the Lyde Green and Kingsfield roundabouts and do include pedestrian and cycling improvements and measures to assist bus priority. Public consultation on this scheme is open at present and we would encourage you to input to the process and share any detailed comments that you might have about the scheme or its individual elements. The public consultation will inform the development of a full business case, which takes account of the benefit a scheme will bring to multiple transport modes and this business case will be submitted to Government for funding to deliver the scheme.

The West of England Combined Authority continues to work with South Gloucestershire Council and the Unitary Authorities more widely, to ensure that all transport schemes in the region seek to improve multiple modes of transport and particularly sustainable transport wherever they can and that individual projects take a joined up approach to improving transport corridors rather than being considered in isolation from the wider network. The scheme itself is part of a wider package of improvements to ring road junctions proposed in the draft Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (2020 – 2036) for the West of England and this document provides the overall approach and strategy to ensure that modal shift, sustainable transport and our declared climate emergency are central to the transport schemes that are proposed in the region.

You will need to direct the second part of your question (shown above in italics) to the political leaders of the West of England authorities.

Question 3 – submitted by Ian Beckey

Subject: North Somerset joining West of England Combined Authority

What progress is now being made on a governance review of the West of England Combined Authority to allow North Somerset council to join the Authority in a shadow form to begin with and in full negotiations with the local government minister, city and county of Bristol mayor, South Gloucestershire

council, B&NES and North Somerset council? – to undertake a new devolution with central government especially in view of the Government White paper on Bus Back Better on improvements to bus services on advance quality partnership and quality contracts which will require North Somerset council to work closely with the West of England combined authority in the delivery of bus services. Especially with depot for First group in Bristol, Lawrence Hill, Hengrove, Wells and Weston Super Mare, Stagecoach West at Patchway and HCT at Bristol Parson Street, Rapt Bath at Keynsham. Bus franchising powers require a strong Authorities and the ability to purchase depot assets from the Transport companies.

REPLY:

The Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee has previously expressed support for a governance review and negotiations with government being progressed with a view to North Somerset Council joining the Combined Authority. In terms of taking this forward, this is a matter that would need to be considered by the political leaders of the West of England authorities.

Question 4 – submitted by Ian Beckey

Subject: Railways

What progress is being made within the West of England Combined Authority with Mayor Norris in setting up a railway executive group of officers to work as a team with Network Rail western routes and First Group Great Western Railway on the delivery of the very important Metrowest network of local train services around Bristol and Bath with the Portishead line and the Henbury line? - Especially in view of the Government new white paper Great British Railways. It is very important that a full governance review is carried out at the mayoral transport authority to put together a full integrated transport authority if the Authority is to gain extra railway and bus power and operate along the lines of Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. Please advise us of progress on such a review.

REPLY:

The West of England Combined Authority has a Strategic Rail Steering Group in place that oversees the rail programme. The group includes Network Rail, Great Western Railway, Department for Transport and representatives from all the West of England Unitary Authorities. Alongside regular programme delivery meetings with Network Rail, our rail projects, including the Portishead and Henbury Lines are continually reviewed via the Steering Group. With regard to the Williams Shapps Review of Rail, and our work to deliver the opportunities within the National Bus Strategy, we are taking a holistic approach to our network to ensure we can bring the maximum benefit to communities across the region. This includes ongoing consideration of powers, and indeed, access to funding.