

COMMENTS FROM WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO: JOINT MEETING OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE - 25 JUNE 2021

Following our meeting held on 23 June, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to present the following comments:

1. Climate Emergency action plan update (agenda item 11)

Whilst noting the update and the actions being taken forward, we are concerned that the overall trajectory of progress suggests that achieving the ambition of net zero carbon for the region by 2030 is extremely challenging - we recognise that this is an issue for the whole region, not just the Combined Authority. We are concerned that the data presented should also demonstrate a connection between the activities planned and the impact on the trajectory so we can assess the remaining gap that needs to be closed.

We note that tackling the climate emergency is a key priority for the Metro Mayor and would welcome him engaging with us about the detail of his specific plans - we suggest a meeting about this in September would be useful, to allow time for this further detail to be developed. We are keen to engage constructively in ambitious plans that could deliver both climate change aspirations and clean economic recovery and growth.

2. Bus network recovery and Bus infrastructure programme (agenda item 12)

We note and support the proposal to publish a Notice of Intent to proceed with the development of a joint Enhanced Partnership between the Combined Authority and North Somerset Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council and bus operators.

Whilst there is clearly a need to work at pace to take forward the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan and an Enhanced Partnership to meet the government's timescale, it is important to ensure this work joins up with other key strategies and plans, e.g. plans for re-allocating road space.

The importance of rural bus services also needs to be fully factored into plans for bus network recovery.

In terms of ticketing, we also suggest it would be useful to investigate (perhaps in liaison with credit unions) whether some form of staggered payment system could be introduced to assist commuters on low incomes in not being excluded from the savings offered through longer-term/season ticketing.

3. Strategic infrastructure interventions

At the strategic level, careful consideration needs to be given to the timing of transport infrastructure intervention - for example, a new Park and Ride(s) in north Bristol needs to

be carefully planned and operational in advance of planned new housing development in Filton.

Liaison should be taking place now with Bristol Zoo about how they will actively seek to mitigate traffic impacts from the further development of the Wild Place Project in South Gloucestershire and address how running the visitor attraction can integrate to maximum effect with available public transport.

4. Public engagement on transport matters

As lockdown restrictions ease, and with the particular challenge ahead of restoring bus and rail patronage to pre-Covid levels, we encourage the Metro Mayor to reinstate the Regional Transport Forum or establish new ways to meaningfully engage the region's public on transport issues.

5. Governance / ways of working

Recognising that Mayoral Combined Authorities are relatively new and evolving, we will be holding an informal meeting in July to consider our scrutiny work programme and how we may need to adjust our arrangements to ensure that we add value to the Combined Authority.

In the spirit of 'continuous improvement', we suggest that it may be appropriate for a wider, internal governance review of the Combined Authority to also be considered.

The position of Deputy Mayor of the Combined Authority was raised and that the constitution should be updated to reflect the position, once clarified.