

COMMENTS FROM WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO: EXTRAORDINARY JOINT MEETING OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE – 21 SEPTEMBER 2021

Following our meeting held on 20 September, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to present the following comments:

a. Metro Mayor's attendance at Scrutiny

We welcomed Metro Mayor Dan Norris' attendance at our meeting and had a useful discussion. We look forward to future positive and ongoing engagement with the Metro Mayor.

b. Principles for a refreshed climate emergency ambition (item 8)

We thank Helen Iles, Senior Policy Manager for her presentation of this report.

We note and welcome the fact that tackling the climate emergency is a key priority for the Metro Mayor and we strongly support the revised principles as set out in the report. As discussed with the Metro Mayor, we also recognise the public appetite for fast, urgent action.

We support the proposal to create an interim Environment Director to drive forward the refreshed ambition with a view to recruiting to this post on a permanent basis in the medium term.

The report seeks to establish a Climate Board for the region - we welcome the broad representation proposed in terms of the membership of this Board and the collaborative partnership approach that will be taken. We also wish to strongly request please that a scrutiny member is given observer status on this Board, in line with the arrangements being made for scrutiny member observers to attend the other Combined Authority Boards.

We particularly welcome the clarity of the target that in order to meet our 2030 net zero carbon ambitions, we will need to cut 464kt of CO₂ each year (10% of today's total) - this sets the huge scale of the challenge ahead and demonstrates the region's ambition. It will be essential to continue collaborative work with the unitary authorities to establish clear, measurable targets within the Climate and Biodiversity strategy/action plan, which are agreed by all authorities and with

robust progress checks and reporting in place; there must be clear lines of accountability for the delivery of each action.

Noting that the new Climate and Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan will be delivered in Spring 2022, we request please that a progress update is specifically brought to Scrutiny in January 2022 to allow us an opportunity to comment and input to this critically important plan. We are particularly keen to see momentum build through urgently identifying and delivering tangible 'quick wins' in parallel with the development of the new strategy and action plan.

c. Green Recovery Fund (item 9)

We broadly welcome and support this report and the recommendation to earmark (from the existing Combined Authority Investment Fund) headroom of £20m for a Green Recovery Fund. We see this amount as a start and any avenues of increasing the amount through match funding or otherwise should be explored. We would like to be kept fully informed as the detailed plans for the drawdown of this fund to support specific actions are developed. We are concerned that the appraisal methods used to guide investment decisions should be fit for purpose, and would welcome an independent expert viability assessment.

Councillor Winston Duguid

Chair-designate

On behalf of the West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee.