

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

Wednesday, 23 June 2021, 10:30am
Council Chamber, Bristol City Hall

Present:

Cllr Winston Duguid, Bath and North East Somerset Council - Chair for the meeting
Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Donald Alexander, Bristol City Council
Cllr Geoff Gollop, Bristol City Council
Cllr Ed Plowden, Bristol City Council

Cllr Gary Hopkins, Bristol City Council
Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council
Cllr Andrew Varney, Bristol City Council
Cllr Brian Allinson, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr John Ashe, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Claire Young, South Gloucestershire Council
(as substitute for Cllr James Arrowsmith)

In attendance from North Somerset Council

Cllr Huw James

Officers In Attendance:

Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal & Democratic Services
Ian Hird, Scrutiny Manager
Tim Milgate, Democratic Services Officer
Andy Strong, Transport Operations Team Manager

David Carter, Director of Infrastructure
Pete Davis, Head of Grant Management & Assurance
Jess Lee, Head of Policy & Strategy
Helen Iles, Senior Policy Manager

Apologies:

Cllr James Arrowsmith, South Gloucestershire Council (Cllr Claire Young attended as substitute)

Cllr Peter Crew, North Somerset Council
Cllr Mike Bird, North Somerset Council

Minutes

1	<p>COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE</p> <p>The membership of the Committee for Municipal Year 2021/22 was noted and new members were welcomed to the Committee.</p>
2	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Cllr James Arrowsmith. Cllr Claire Young attended as substitute. Apologies were also received from Cllr Peter Crew.</p>
3	<p>ELECTION OF CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 2021-22</p> <p>No agreement was reached on election of Chair, so this matter was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>Councillor Winston Duguid was appointed as Chair for this meeting only.</p> <p>Agreed: (1) That the election of Chair for the West of England Combined Authority Overview &</p>

	<p>Scrutiny Committee for Municipal Year 2021/22 be deferred to the next meeting; (2) That Cllr Winston Duguid be appointed as Chair for this meeting only.</p>
4	<p>ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 2021-22</p> <p>As no Chair had been elected for Municipal Year 2021/22, the election of Vice-Chair was deferred to the next meeting.</p> <p>Agreed: That the election of Vice-Chair for the West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee for Municipal Year 2021/22 be deferred to the next meeting.</p>
5	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no Declarations of Interest declared.</p>
6	<p>COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE</p> <p>The Terms of Reference for the West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny committee had been set out in the agenda papers and were noted.</p>
7	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.</p>
8	<p>ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS; STATEMENTS; PETITIONS)</p> <p>Four questions had been received from members of the public for response as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dave Redgewell – Bus Back Better 2. Dave Redgewell – Bristol Ring Road 3. Ian Beckey - North Somerset joining West of England Combined Authority 4. Ian Beckey – Railways <p>The responses to the questions were circulated to the questioners and members of the Committee prior to the meeting.</p> <p>In addition, three statements had been received from members of the public as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. David Redgewell - Transport and regional issues 2. Steven Hunt - Transport issues 3. Lucy Travis - Transport issues <p>Mr Redgewell attended the meeting and addressed the Committee on the subject of his statement. The statements were circulated to the Committee and published on the Authority's website prior to the meeting.</p>
9	<p>REVIEW OF 25 JUNE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE & WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE REPORTS</p> <p>The Committee were requested to consider the reports to be considered by the West of England Combined Authority Committee and Joint Committee at its meeting on 25 June 2021 and to consider what comments it wished to make to that meeting in relation to those reports.</p>

Item 11 – Climate Emergency Action Plan Update

Jess Lee, Head of Policy and Strategy and Helen Iles, Senior Policy Manager, gave a brief summary of this report and answered questions from the Committee thereon. The following points were raised:

- Promoting Green Skills – the Authority was at the early stage of working with providers on training on retrofits;
- At the moment the benchmarking data was nationally available data but work was ongoing on providing data at individual authority level;
- The initial trajectory figures were being finalised, although Covid had impacted on some of the data sets. An established baseline figure would be necessary;
- The next stage of the Local Transport Plan would look at alternative fuel for vehicles and was likely to be ready in autumn 2022. Figures per authority were available in the report. It was noted however that although car travel had reached pre-Covid levels, public transport usage was still much lower;
- It was noted that although costs to homeowners could be mitigated there were still huge barriers that prevented homeowners from implementing some of the necessary measures;
- The Committee requested a meeting with the new Metro Mayor Dan Norris, which could include discussion regarding the Authority's position on the expansion of Bristol Airport;
- In relation to the proposed meeting with the new Mayor, it was asked whether the Mayor could be asked to provide evidence of how the climate emergency measures were being successful;
- It was commented that the "re-start" of the economy after Covid restrictions was an excellent opportunity to find more efficient ways of reinvesting.

Item 12 - Bus Network Recovery and Bus Infrastructure Programme

Andy Strong, Transport Operations Team Manager, gave a brief summary of this report and answered questions from the Committee thereon. The following points were raised:

- A major challenge was around bus services in rural villages, and around Bristol Parkway station which had seen huge improvements in facilities and was in need of a major transport hub. Problems continued with the parkway bridge which caused traffic jams; David Carter answered that the Authority was aware of these issues, but a masterplan was needed to be drawn up. A ten-year rail plan was committed to looking at Parkway, especially in regard to services from Henbury;
- The current infrastructure programme does not reflect aspirations, and part of the challenge was to increase the numbers of buses throughout the region as well as a detailed analysis of the park and ride services (particular issues were raised regarding North Bristol, Filton and Yate). A funding bid was necessary for this. Appendix 4 to the report set out the current position;
- Bus franchising was a matter for the Metro Mayor who could use his powers in the future if needed. Targets were set every six months;
- At the current time, the government had not granted additional funding to support bus services but current services were being maintained as well as all current supported bus services. It was unknown what the next tranche of government funding would be.
- The Authority were aware of issues regarding the arena and the proposed relocation of Bristol Zoo. Planning applications would have to provide evidence of mitigation of car journeys;
- It was asked whether the Regional Transport Forum would be reinstated;
- The Authority were working with transport operators on finding a best fares solution with many commuters likely to change their travel arrangements post-pandemic;

- It was asked that the strategy be linked to other strategies and solutions such as precepting be explored;
- Public Transport provisions were considered as part of the overall transport modelling solutions.

Item 15 – Strategic Rail Investment

David Carter, Director of Infrastructure, gave a brief summary of this report and answered questions from the Committee thereon. The following points were raised:

- The Authority had looked at improvements for existing stations as well as new stations;
- A variety of sites had been considered at Fishbourne Hill – the timelines for the improvements there would be confirmed;
- Five stations had been earmarked initially to become step free.

Item 18 – Investment Fund Report

Pete Davis, Head of Grant Management & Assurance, gave a brief summary of this report and answered questions from the Committee thereon. The following points were raised:

- The report sought a number of approvals for spend, especially in the Housing, Business and Skills areas.

The above comments were collated into the comments the Committee wished to pass to the West of England Combined Authority Committee in consideration of those items. These comments are set out in Appendix 1.

In addition, the Committee asked whether it was a requirement that the Metro Mayor appointed a deputy. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that it was a requirement but no formal timetable was set out. The Committee also enquired whether a governance review of the Authority's functions should now be carried out. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that there was an annual review of the constitution which may be an appropriate time.

Agreed: That the comments from the West of England Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the West of England Combined Authority Committee reports, as set out in Appendix 1, be collated and circulated to the West of England Combined Authority Committee for its consideration during its decision-making process.

The meeting closed at 12:13pm.

APPENDIX 1

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.