

COMMENTS FROM CHAIR OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE 3 DECEMBER 2021

I wish to present the following comments to the 3 December Combined Authority Committee on behalf of scrutiny members:

1. Inquorate committee meeting in October:

It was obviously very disappointing that the 15th October meeting did not go ahead. The scrutiny committee had spent some considerable time in formulating comments and agreeing our input to a number of important decisions that were expected to be taken.

I did attend the impromptu informal meeting, along with the chair of the LEP, and gave an overview of our comments and recommendations to the Metro Mayor and those members of the public who had turned up to give their speeches. I will not be in attendance on December 3rd but we have arranged an additional meeting on December 13th to review the papers for the December 17th Joint Committee meeting. I shall be in attendance on the 17th.

2. Comments on the 3 December committee reports:

a. Agenda item 9 - Green Recovery Fund

Following on from COP26 and given the critical importance of taking forward urgent action to achieve the region's ambitious 2030 net zero target, we support the establishment of the Green Recovery Fund and the related £30m allocation from the Investment Fund.

As per our previous comments submitted when this Fund was first proposed at your Extraordinary meeting in September, we re-emphasise that avenues of levering in additional funding and increasing the amount through match funding or otherwise must be explored to their maximum potential.

We note that full business cases will be developed and brought back to the committee for agreement to release specific funding 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, as per our comments in September, would welcome an independent expert viability assessment.

We would like to be kept regularly updated on progress on the delivery of outcomes through the Green Recovery Fund. It will be important to robustly track and challenge this delivery as necessary.

We support the specific proposal to allocate an initial award of £300k from the Green Recovery Fund to expand the Innovate Housing Retrofit Scheme, as part of the Low Carbon Challenge Fund project.

Again, we would remind you of our previous comment that in terms of climate action, there must be a strong and sustained focus on retrofitting the region's properties.

b. Agenda item 10 - Green skills and advice prioritisation in response to Budget and Spending review

The proposals in this report clearly flow on from the establishment of the Green Recovery Fund. In line with our comments above, we support the proposals to ringfence £3m of the £30m Green Recovery Fund towards a retrofit programme subject to business case approval and to allocate £200k from the Green Recovery Fund to create a Retrofit Step-Up programme.

c. Agenda item 11 - Bristol Temple Meads eastern entrance - funding

We support the proposal to include the full cost of £23.65m for the Bristol Temple Meads eastern entrance in the Investment Fund programme. We note that there may be a possibility of securing government funding to reduce or remove this call on the Investment Fund and would welcome that additional investment if forthcoming.

d. Agenda item 12 - UK Community Renewal Fund

We support these proposed grant allocations and welcome the fact that the projects that have successfully attracted funding will collectively support 115 people into education or training (including skills for green jobs), assist 300 people who are economically inactive, safeguard 50 jobs, create 40 decarbonisation plans and save over 2,500 tonnes of CO₂, alongside other outputs

3. West of England Joint Committee – 17 December

We will be meeting on 13 December to review and formulate comments on the 17 December Joint Committee agenda papers.

Councillor Winston Duguid

Chair

West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee.