

# Minutes of the West of England Joint Committee Friday, 17 December 2021

## Members present:

Metro Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority (Chair)

Councillor Toby Savage, Leader, South Gloucestershire Council

Councillor Craig Cheney (substituting for Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council)

Councillor Kevin Guy, Leader, Bath & North East Somerset Council

Councillor Donald Davies, Leader, North Somerset Council

Richard Bonner, Chair, West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (non-voting member)

1	<p><b>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced the members of the Joint Committee.</p>
2	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Mayor Marvin Rees and that Councillor Cheney was attending as a substitute for Mayor Rees.</p>
3	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
4	<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS</b></p> <p><b>a. Joint meeting – West of England Combined Authority Committee &amp; West of England Joint Committee – 25 June 2021</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes of the joint meeting of the West of England Combined Authority Committee and the West of England Joint Committee held on 25 June 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair insofar as they relate to the Joint Committee.</p> <p><b>b. Extraordinary Joint meeting – West of England Combined Authority Committee &amp; West of England Joint Committee – 21 September 2021</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the minutes of the extraordinary joint meeting of the West of England Combined Authority Committee and the West of England Joint Committee held on 21 September 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair insofar as they relate to the Joint Committee.</p>
5	<p><b>CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that he wished to give an update on the situation regarding bus services, which was one of the issues that scrutiny members had raised when he had attended their meeting earlier that week:</p> <p>* He was very aware of the risk of irreparable damage to the region's bus network that the potential loss of Bus Recovery Grant would bring to the region from April next year. Earlier that month, he had written a joint letter with Councillor Donald Davies to Baroness Vere, the Minister responsible for buses, setting out a clear message that this cliff-edge funding cut was pushing bus operators to plan for the cancellation of services. It was essential that this did not happen.</p> <p>* He had now had a response from the Minister advising that the government recognised the ongoing challenges faced by operators and local transport authorities to maintain services and was currently working with the sector to understand how</p>

these might impact services after Covid recovery funding ends and what further action might be needed. The Chair stated that, in his view, these warm words needed to be followed by hard cash and gave an assurance that he would continue to press the government hard to do the right thing and confirm their continued funding support before irreversible decisions were taken by bus companies.

**6 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS; STATEMENTS; PETITIONS)**

The Chair advised that 4 questions had been submitted in advance of this meeting on the following subjects:

1. David Redgewell - Bus/coach interchanges
2. David Redgewell - Rail services
3. Dick Daniel - Public transport - trams
4. Tony Lloyd - Portishead rail line

The Chair then confirmed that written replies had been sent to all questioners in advance of the meeting. The questions and replies had been circulated to committee members and were available to view on the Combined Authority web site.

The Chair then advised that 5 statements had been received in advance of the meeting. The statements had been circulated to committee members and were available to view on the Combined Authority web site. The statements received were on the following subjects (statements were presented by those in attendance):

1. David Redgewell - Transport issues
2. John Daghish - Public transport - light rail
3. Tay McLean-Foreman - Public transport - trams
4. Julie Boston - Catch the bus West of England campaign
5. Christina Biggs - Transport issues

**7 COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP**

Richard Bonner, Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership Board commented as follows:

- \* In terms of clarity around decision-taking and to assist good governance, he welcomed the fact the Joint Committee and Combined Authority Committee would now meet as separate entities rather than as a joint meeting of both committees.
- \* He had already written to members outlining comments on the proposed Joint Committee governance review. In his view, it would be important to involve the Local Enterprise Partnership Board in this review given the Board has oversight of the Local Growth Fund, Economic Development Fund and Revolving Infrastructure Fund and acts in an advisory capacity to the West of England Joint Committee. In his view, it was important to retain the current flexibility as a region in managing funding pots; to date, this flexibility had enabled swift action to be taken to ensure the region could maximise the advantage of time-limited funding such as the Getting Building Fund. Without this flexibility, the region may lose out on future opportunities.
- \* He retained some concerns about the timing of the review, noting that the current national review of Local Enterprise Partnerships was likely to reinforce the relationship between the Partnership and the Combined Authority.
- \* He welcomed the Invest Bristol and Bath performance overview included in the agenda papers, noting the focus on strategic sectors including high tech, professional services and creative industries.

	<p>* He also noted the progress update from the Western Gateway. It will be important to ensure that this brings partners together to work on pan-regional projects such as international marketing and innovative energy sources such as nuclear and hydrogen.</p>
8	<p><b>COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that Councillor Winston Duguid, Chair of the Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had submitted comments on behalf of the committee following on from their meeting held on 13 December 2021. These comments had been circulated in advance of the meeting and were available to view on the Combined Authority web site.</p> <p>Councillor Duguid presented these comments together with Councillor Ed Plowden, Chair of the Scrutiny Transport sub-group.</p>
9	<p><b>WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS</b></p> <p>The Joint Committee considered a report which clarified the voting arrangements at Joint Committee meetings (agenda item 9).</p> <p>The Chair welcomed the clarification given in this report on the voting arrangements.</p> <p>Councillor Savage also welcomed the clarity provided through this report on the voting arrangements.</p> <p>The Joint Committee <b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <p><b>To note that the Metro Mayor does not have a right of veto on matters relating to the Joint Committee; all voting is by way of a simple majority of those present and voting and will exclude the Metro Mayor for the particular items set out in the Joint Committee Terms of Reference.</b></p>
10	<p><b>WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE REVIEW</b></p> <p>The Joint Committee considered a report which proposed a review of the Joint Committee's current constitutional arrangements and a review into the governance and administration of the Joint Committee's funding streams (agenda item 10).</p> <p>The Chair commented that this report had been produced through the West of England unitary authorities. In his view, given the context of the expected announcement of the government's levelling-up white paper due early in the new year, this was the wrong report at the wrong time. He was also concerned that the Local Enterprise Partnership Board had not been consulted about the issue of retaining the current flexibility as a region in managing funding pots, as highlighted earlier at the meeting by the Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership Board.</p> <p>Councillor Savage moved the report recommendations.</p> <p>This motion was seconded by Councillor Guy.</p>

The Chair then moved the following amendment to the report:

*Amend recommendation 2 to read:*

'To implement a review into the governance and administration of the Joint Committee's funding streams and to commission the Chief Executives and Monitoring Officers of the four Unitary Authorities to work with the LEP Board and CEO to review the administrative arrangements for Joint Committee's investment sources including the Local Growth Fund (LGF), Economic Development Fund (EDF), Revolving Infrastructure Fund (RIF), having regard to the advantages of the single pot approach and flexibility across funding programmes. Recommendations from the review to be formally reported to the LEP Board and then to Joint Committee.'

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Davies.

Councillor Guy, Councillor Savage and Councillor Cheney all indicated that they were supportive of the amendment.

Councillor Savage added that he welcomed the review and the opportunity to take forward collaborative working to clarify and improve on the Joint Committee's current constitutional arrangements. In relation to the specific point raised about consultation with the Local Enterprise Partnership Board, he pointed out that a discussion had taken place in December with the Board's business sector representatives.

Voting then took place on the amendment. All 5 members present voted unanimously in favour of the amendment.

The amendment having been carried, the Joint Committee then voted on the substantive motion (including the amendment to recommendation 2 as carried) and

**RESOLVED:**

**1. To commission the Monitoring Officers of the Unitary Authorities which constitute the Joint Committee to review the Joint Committee's current constitutional arrangements and to make recommendations which will be considered by the Joint Committee by March 2022.**

**2. To implement a review into the governance and administration of the Joint Committee's funding streams and to commission the Chief Executives and Monitoring Officers of the four Unitary Authorities to work with the LEP Board and CEO to review the administrative arrangements for Joint Committee's investment sources including the Local Growth Fund (LGF), Economic Development Fund (EDF), Revolving Infrastructure Fund (RIF), having regard to the advantages of the single pot approach and flexibility across funding programmes. Recommendations from the review to be formally reported to the LEP Board and then to Joint Committee.**

**3. To requisition a meeting of the Joint Committee by March 2022 at Weston-Super-Mare's Town Hall to consider the next steps.**

11	<p><b>LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP AND INVEST BRISTOL AND BATH BUDGET OUTTURN - APRIL - OCTOBER 2021</b></p> <p>The Joint Committee considered a report which presented the forecasted revenue outturn for the West of England Joint Committee for the financial year 2021/22 based on data for the period from April to October 2021 (agenda item 11).</p> <p>The Chair commented that the report also included a high-level overview of performance of the Invest Bristol and Bath service; the report was for the Joint Committee’s information and there were no decisions to be taken.</p> <p>Councillor Cheney welcomed the report and suggested it would be appropriate for regular updates to be brought to the Joint Committee on inward investment performance through Invest Bristol and Bath.</p> <p>Councillor Savage echoed the request for regular inward investment performance reports and welcomed the new high-tech investment as highlighted in the performance overview. He also drew attention to the breadth of work and projects supported through the funding streams falling within the Joint Committee’s remit.</p> <p>Councillor Guy also welcomed the report, including the vital work being supported through Green Homes grants.</p> <p>The Joint Committee then <b>RESOLVED</b>:</p> <p><b>1. To note the Local Enterprise Partnership revenue outturn as set out in Appendix 1.</b></p> <p><b>2. To note the Invest Bristol and Bath performance overview as set out in Appendix 2.</b></p>
12	<p><b>LOCAL GROWTH FUND, GETTING BUILDING FUND, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND AND REVOLVING INFRASTRUCTURE FUND - CHANGE REQUESTS</b></p> <p>The Joint Committee considered a report which sought approval for the latest scheme change requests in relation to these funds and also sought approval of the updated West of England Local Growth Assurance Framework, which had been updated to reflect the latest government guidance (agenda item 12).</p> <p>The Chair moved the report recommendations.</p> <p>This motion was seconded by Councillor Davies. In seconding the motion, Councillor Davies welcomed the delivery being taken forward on a wide range of projects as highlighted in the report.</p> <p>Councillor Cheney welcomed the report and highlighted in particular the Temple Quarter enabling works and the wider benefits of the Temple Quarter regeneration and sustainable growth which would create 10,00 new homes, 22,000 new jobs and bring £1.6bn annual income to the local economy.</p> <p>Councillor Guy commented that the report demonstrated the benefits of taking</p>

projects forward through collaborative working, and through drawing down funding in a strategic way to support priorities; the works being carried out currently in Keynsham town centre were a good example of this.

Councillor Savage also welcomed the report and referred in particular to the investment in the innovative and global first UMBRELLA digital platform/testbed, linking with South Gloucestershire's five innovation hubs, including the Robotics Lab.

The Chair concluded the discussion by stressing there must be a clear focus moving forward on prioritising investment and then ensuring delivery.

The Joint Committee **RESOLVED**:

- 1. To approve the updated Local Growth Assurance Framework.**
- 2. To approve the treatment of the schemes within the Revolving Infrastructure Fund programme as set out in paragraph 4.2 and the Revolving Infrastructure Fund principles detailed in Appendix 1.**
- 3. To approve the change requests for schemes within the Local Growth and Getting Building Fund programmes as set out in Appendix 2.**
- 4. To approve the change requests for schemes within the Economic Development Fund programme as set out in Appendix 3.**

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#### **METROWEST PHASE 1B - PORTISHEAD LINE UPDATE**

The Joint Committee considered a report which provided an update on progress on the delivery of MetroWest phase 1b (the Portishead line), the delay to the Development Consent Order and the steps being taken to mitigate that delay (agenda item 13).

The Chair advised that this report was for the Joint Committee's information and there was no decision to be taken.

Councillor Davies thanked officers for their ongoing work in seeking to resolve the delay in relation to the Development Consent Order; the delay was a source of ongoing frustration to members and the public.

The Chair and Councillor Guy expressed the hope that the Development Consent Order issue will be resolved as quickly as possible, also noting the efforts of officers on this matter.

The Joint Committee **RESOLVED**:

- \* To note the Development Consent Order delay and associated mitigation measures.**

**WEST OF ENGLAND INVESTMENT PRIORITIES**

The Joint Committee considered a report which updated on work underway to progress the region's key infrastructure priorities (agenda item 14). The report also proposed key principles behind an illustrative set of key projects as outlined in appendix 1 and the investment required from various investment sources to progress and deliver the region's key infrastructure priorities.

Councillor Davies moved the report recommendations.

This motion was seconded by Councillor Guy.

Councillor Davies welcomed the report. He commented that the geography of the Combined Authority and North Somerset formed a functional economic area and that all authorities were ambitious to deliver sustainable economic growth and infrastructure investment for the benefit of residents. There were inevitably differing views on priorities for investment; it was essential that honest political discussions were taken forward to determine these priorities moving forwards, taking full account of the needs of the region as a whole.

Councillor Cheney welcomed the report and drew attention to the range of key priorities that will need to be discussed and agreed. These discussions will need to take full account of the importance of sustained investment to deliver the net zero carbon agenda, green skills, green infrastructure and environmental infrastructure requirements in the context of the climate emergency, including flood defences. In this context, he welcomed the recent decision taken by the West of England Combined Authority Committee to establish a Green Recovery Fund.

Councillor Guy welcomed the opportunity for the authorities to now take forward collaborative discussions and agree investment priorities for the benefit of the whole region. This must include accelerating the digital agenda, particularly in improving digital connectivity across rural parts of the region.

Councillor Savage also welcomed the report and highlighted that the discussions to be taken forward on investment priorities must recognise the need for ambitious and transformational delivery across the region on the full range of sustainable transport options.

Richard Bonner welcomed the report; from the perspective of the Local Enterprise Partnership Board, representatives of the business community will be pleased to input to discussions on prioritisation and delivery.

The Chair commented that as a first step in the discussions to come, he had written to the Combined Authority constituent authorities to propose that an initial meeting of Mayors and Leaders be held in early January to discuss headroom within the Investment Fund (ahead of the 28 January meeting of the Combined Authority Committee.).

The Joint Committee **RESOLVED:**

**1. To note the work that is underway to progress the region's key infrastructure priorities.**



**2. To agree the key principles behind the illustrative set of key projects as outlined in appendix 1 and the investment required from various investment sources to progress and deliver the region’s key infrastructure priorities.**

**3. To agree to explore options to streamline the funding processes with the Combined Authority to help accelerate delivery.**

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**WESTERN GATEWAY UPDATE**

The Joint Committee considered a report which provided an update on the Western Gateway (cross-border economic partnership of Local Authorities, City Regions, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Governments in Wales and Westminster (agenda item 15)).

The Chair advised that this report was for the Joint Committee’s information and there was no decision to be taken.

Councillor Savage welcomed the update on the Western Gateway, noting that the Secretariat and Accountable Body status is hosted by South Gloucestershire Council on behalf of the partnership. In terms of the priority workstreams identified in the report, he highlighted in particular the STEP Fusion project, noting that the Western Gateway ‘Severn Edge’ nomination had been successful in being selected into the last five contenders for a UK first prototype fusion power plant. He welcomed the range of opportunities that could be taken forward through this partnership and looked forward to future updates.

Councillor Cheney also welcomed the report and the opportunities presented through this economic partnership, which in his view has huge potential to assist the delivery of transformational projects. In addition to the STEP Fusion project, he highlighted and welcomed the decision of the partnership to explore unlocking the tidal energy potential of the Severn Estuary and the opportunities around innovation and inward investment as referred to in the report.

In also welcoming the report, Councillor Guy commented that through this partnership, there will also be opportunities to unite in delivering net zero carbon.

Councillor Davies also generally welcomed the report.

The Joint Committee **RESOLVED:**

\* To note the update.

The Chair then closed the meeting at 1.16 p.m.

**Signed:**

**Date:**

