

Public Forum

Questions Received

1	Thomas Gravatt <i>MetroWest</i>
2	Cllr Gary Hopkins <i>Bristol Bus Service satisfaction</i>
3	Cllr Claire Young <i>Pothole Action Fund</i>
4	Cllr Mike Drew <i>Introduction of supplementary questions for WECA meetings</i>
5	David Redgewell, Bus Users UK and South West Transport Network <i>Stagecoach Bus Service</i>
6	Stephen Williams MP <i>MetroBus</i>

Question 1

Thomas Gravatt

1. What will WECA do to assist with finding the funding for the Portishead railway?
2. Will WECA communicate with Chris Grayling and others to remind them of the importance of the Portishead railway project and to request funding from central government?
3. What will WECA do to ensure that funding is found by September in time for the submission of a development consent order for the project?

Answer:

1. *The West of England Combined Authority has, through the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Growth Fund, funded the majority of the £10m development costs for MetroWest Phase 1 (includes Portishead) and £44.5m towards delivery. An additional £6m from the West of England Investment Fund was approved by the West of England Combined Authority Committee in December 2017 to present a compelling case for Large Majors funding by the Department for Transport but subject to a successful Large Majors bid.*

The West of England Combined Authority will continue to work with North Somerset Council on securing full funding for MetroWest Phase 1.

2. *The West of England Combined Authority is in constant communication with the Department for Transport on the MetroWest programme and wider aspirations for suburban rail in the West of England region.*
3. *The West of England Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership will continue its work with North Somerset Council on MetroWest Phase 1.*

Question 2

Cllr Gary Hopkins

1. Can the Mayor tell us whether he feels the reduction in public satisfaction with bus services in Bristol from 58.1% in 2011 to 40.2% in 2017 (BCC quality of life survey)is linked to the introduction of a Mayor for Bristol in late 2011 or the specific failure to introduce a franchise system to protect services?
2. Will the Mayor base policy and his bus strategy on real public feeling rather than biased data coming purely from bus passengers and start using his powers to franchise?

Answer:

1. *Bus passenger satisfaction across the West of England is improving. The most recent Transport Focus survey in the West of England shows that 89% of passengers are very or fairly satisfied with their overall journey in 2016/17 (up from 85% the previous year).*
2. *The passenger survey data collected by Transport Focus is transparent and objective. The West of England Bus Strategy will transparently assess delivery mechanisms available to the combined authority (including the opportunity to franchise local bus services in its area) prior to a recommendation on the most appropriate approach for passengers, residents and businesses.*

Question 3

Cllr Claire Young

At February's meeting of WECA the Authority allocated the Pothole Action Fund to the constituent authorities in the following orders:

B&NES - £198,000

Bristol - £187,000

South Gloucestershire - £263,000

We now understand that the amounts the authorities received were in fact only:

B&NES - £189,478

Bristol - £177,234

South Gloucestershire - £252,034

Can you please explain why local authorities have been short changed by almost £30,000 and what action you are taking to remedy this?

Answer:

In total, three tranches of Pothole Action Fund grants have been announced by DfT and distributed to constituent authorities by the WECA;

- 1) £891,000 March 2017
- 2) £618,746 February 2018
- 3) £1,240,704 March 2018

The indicative allocations to Constituent Authorities for the second tranche of funding were included in the 2 February 2018 WECA Committee report. These were provided by colleagues at DfT in early January, however, as referenced in the report to Committee, were subject to formal confirmation of the funding, which was subsequently received on 5 February.

Constituent Authority s151 Officers were notified of the actual allocations made by DfT on 7 February, accompanied by an explanation that the final grants were lower than the amounts that were initially expected and that DfT had indicated this was due to allocations due to

London Authorities that hadn't been provided for in those circulated prior to Ministerial approval of the grants.

All Highways Maintenance Capital Grants received by the West of England Combined Authority, including the Pothole Action Fund, have been pass-ported in full to Constituent Authorities in line with the formula allocations which they would have received from DfT.

Question 4

Cllr Mike Drew

You will recall from when we served together on South Gloucestershire Council, that councillors there have the right to ask oral questions of the administration, in follow-up to answers received to their written questions. Do you agree with me that this sort of questioning is conducive to transparent and democratic government and, if so, will you commit to introducing supplementary oral questions for WECA meetings?

Answer:

The Combined Authority governance was agreed by each of the Councils and allows all the members of the Combined Authority to participate in debates and voting.

WECA has built a governance arrangement that ensures Councillors nominated by their constituent councils can engage in discussions and influence decision making. Councillors can engage through our Advisory Boards, Scrutiny function and Audit Committee and are represented by their council leaders at WECA Committee as members of the Combined Authority.

Question 5

David Redgewell, Bus Users UK and South West Transport Network.

1. Can WECA confirm that Stagecoach have access to suitable sites for the repair and maintenance of the expanded fleet that will be needed to keep the services previously operated by Wessex and being taken over, running?
2. We also wish to know if WECA responded to the changes made by Stagecoach to the Bath – London MegaBus services resulting in a loss of that service and whether they were able to offer any assistance prior to the decision for it to stop?

Answer:

1. *The provision of suitable depot facilities for the accommodation and maintenance of vehicles for a local bus service is the responsibility of the operator.*
2. *The service you describe is not a local bus route and is therefore outside of our jurisdiction.*

Question 6

Stephen Williams

In response to my question at the last meeting (1st June, answered under West of England Joint Committee Public Forum) to the Mayor about who has responsibility and accountability for MetroBus, he listed a whole series of bodies and unnamed officers but did not mention himself (or the Mayor of Bristol) once - despite his responsibility to produce a regional bus strategy. Will he assure us that the future of MetroBus will be included within his bus strategy and that he will begin to take some responsibility for it moving forward over the coming months and years?

Answer:

Metrobus is a legacy project run by the three participating councils (North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bristol City Council), which has been developed for a number of years and is now coming to delivery.

WECA is jointly responsible for the Joint Local Transport Plan and Bus Strategy, and as part of that work will consider how to take forward bus services including metrobus, once the existing network has been delivered.