

DRAFT

Minutes of the West of England Joint Committee , Friday, 8 April 2022

Members:

Metro Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority
Cllr Kevin Guy, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Cllr Toby Savage, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Asher Craig, Bristol City Council
Cllr Donald Davies, North Somerset Council

1	<p>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS</p> <p>The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced the members of the Joint Committee.</p>
2	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Mayor Marvin Rees. Councillor Craig Cheney attended the meeting as a substitute.</p>
3	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCALISM ACTION 2011</p> <p>There were none.</p>
4	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 28th January 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>
5	<p>CHAIR ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>There were none.</p>
6	<p>ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC</p> <p>The Chair advised that 2 questions from David Redgewell had been submitted in advance of this meeting on the following subjects:</p> <p>Q 1 David Redgewell – Transport issues Q 2 David Redgewell – Levelling Up and Integrated Transport Authority</p> <p>The Chair then confirmed that written replies had been sent to David Redgewell 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.</p> <p>The Chair then advised that a statement from David Redgewell had been received in advance of the meeting. The statement had been circulated to committee members and were available to view on the Combined Authority web site.</p>
7	<p>COMMENT FROM CHAIRS OF LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP</p> <p>Richard Bonner, Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership Board gave the following comments on the agenda papers on behalf of the Local Enterprise Partnership Board:</p> <p>Budget Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The budget report highlights how the region continues to benefit from the funds overseen by the Local Enterprise Partnership. • Pleasing to see that BANES have brought forward the proposals and what appears to be as strong business case to acquire the Milson Quarter site, which highlight the importance of our regional cultural assets - in this instance the Fashion Museum - in supporting wider city regeneration through attracting footfall, increasing dwell time, driving spend and overall improving the desirability of the area to commercial and private tenants. I look forward to receiving updates as this flagship project progresses. This links well to the work significant work that the LEP board

contributed to in delivering a Cultural Compact for the region.

- I would like to endorse the need to retain the proposed LEP reserves, the drawdown of reserves in the last financial year have been carefully considered and well deployed to support partners and deliver value. With the impending Integration Review and possible changes, it is prudent to do so.

Joint Committee Governance Review

We are in discussions with Government about the next steps for the Local Enterprise Partnership following the review of all Local Enterprise Partnerships. The review commenced in early 2021 and I would like to formally note my thanks to the Board Members and staff at the LEP / Combined Authority for their patience and continued support over the time of this review.

- I have been encouraged by the recognition of the positive impact of LEPs in the Levelling Up Whitepaper, and we look forward to working with Government to take forwards the recommendations to bring the LEP into the Combined Authority and shape a local solution to create a platform to work with North Somerset Council.
- The LEP Board discussed this at their meeting on 30 March. and the Board are keen to work together with Government and the Combined Authority to ensure that a future model builds on our success to date to deliver a vibrant, inclusive and, greener future for our region.
- The LEP recommend that a working group, comprising representatives from the Combined Authority, the LEP, North Somerset and a representative from the three other Unitaries to consider options and proposals to bring before the respective bodies in the early summer.
- I generally agreeable to the proposals within the paper relating to the LEP, but I am keen that the recommendations are clear on the need for the forthcoming review to be undertaken in accordance with the principles set out in the recent letter to LEP Chairs, MCA Mayors and Leaders on the Integration plans for LEP's, and as directed by the recommendations following the recent LEP Board Meeting.

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COMMENTS FROM THE COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair advised that Councillor Winston Duguid, Chair of the Combined Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee had submitted written comments following on from the meeting of the committee held on 4th April. These comments had been circulated in advance of the meeting and were available to view on the Combined Authority web site.

Councillor Duguid presented the comments by reading out the following statement related to Joint Committee Governance Review:

'The author did not attend the scrutiny meeting so there was no one to whom we could ask questions. We have no objection to receiving papers from UAs, but this is the second time a paper has been presented and no one has shown up to present.

I have reviewed the paper and were it to be adopted it does raise accountability issues. Also given that we are still finding out the detail from the Levelling Up White paper and the future of the LEP and its relationship within the Combined authority, it seems the wrong time to be making such changes as they may well be going against the direction of travel that HMG are stating will be in place in the future.

Scrutiny reiterated the importance of collaborative working amongst the Authorities, and other bodies such as the Western Gateway (on matters such as the Maritime Strategy). They requested an update at a future meeting regarding any plans for North Somerset to join the

Combined Authority, including a clear timeline/roadmap if possible, and any effect this would have on the LEP activities as outlined in the recent White Paper.

There are parts of this paper that concern me that we're not really addressing the central issue of how we work collaboratively together and worry that we're setting off on the track which could confuse rather than what the objective is, which is a laudable objective of trying to get us all working on.'

9 LATEST LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN REPORT

The Joint Committee considered a report which sought approval of the latest Local Enterprise Partnership revenue budget outturn report.

The Chair introduced this report by saying that this report presented the forecasted revenue outturn for the West of England Joint Committee for the financial year 2021/22 based on data for the period April 2021 to February 2022. The report covered the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Invest Bristol and Bath (IBB) revenue budgets.

The Chair moved the report recommendations.

This motion was seconded by Councillor Savage.

The voting arrangements for this item were as follows:

Recommendations 1 and 2 - To note only – no voting or decision required.

Recommendation 3 - Simple majority vote of those members present and voting, excluding the Metro Mayor

Recommendations 4 and 5 - Simple majority vote of those members present and voting.

The Joint Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Note the Revised Analysis of LEP External Grants as at the end of February 2022.
- 2) Note the LEP revenue outturn as set out in Appendix 1.
- 3) Approve the Full Business Case for the acquisition of property in Milsom Quarter, Bath for the Fashion Museum and the award of funding in line with the Red Book valuation and able to be accommodated within the headroom in the Revolving Infrastructure Fund programme.
- 4) Approve the change requests for schemes in the Local Growth and Getting Building Fund programme as set out in Appendix 2.
- 5) Approve the change requests for schemes in the Economic Development and Revolving Infrastructure Fund programmes as set out in Appendix 3.

10 JOINT COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Joint Committee considered a report which sought approval of the Joint Committee Governance Review from prepared by the 4 Unitary Authorities.

Councillor Donald Davies said that it was important to stress from a North Somerset point of view the importance of the Joint Committee, as they were not part of the West of England Combined Authority, and how sensitive this was for them. Councillor Davies added that there was no intention of not having Metro Mayor on the Joint Committee. In the light of various conversations held in the last hour, and taking on board comments made by the LEP and Overview & Scrutiny Chairs in terms of direction of travel, Councillor Davies moved the

following amendments to the recommendations:

- New recommendation 4 - To note the comments made by the Scrutiny and LEP Chairs, which will be considered as part of the report produced by Monitoring Officers setting out new standing orders which be considered at the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
- Recommendation 7 (which was recommendation 6) to be re-worded as - To ensure clearer accountability of the Joint Committee and in line with Quality Assurance Framework, approve the principle that for those funds that are the responsibility of the 4 Unitary Authorities, for example the Economic Development Fund reports, will be commissioned by the Committee and signed-off by Unitary Authority (UA) CEOs in partnership with the CEO of the LEP before publication.

Councillor Guy seconded the amendment.

Councillor Kevin Guy said that he took on board comments from the LEP and Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and that it was important for them to get involved in the process.

Councillor Toby Savage said that he was supportive of amended recommendations which took into account comments made along the way. Councillor Savage added that there was not intention to exclude Metro Mayor from the Joint Committee. The report content was about strengthening co-working not just across sub region but also wider region with establishment of Western Gateway and changes in the policy landscape. The report was setting out the direction of travel and would come back to the Joint Committee for a decision.

The voting arrangements for this item were as follows:

For all amendments: Majority vote of all present (Metro Mayor did not vote)

Voting then took place on the amendment. 4 members present voted in favour of the amendments. Metro Mayor did not vote.

Patricia Greer said that under the current arrangements, the Combined Authority is the Accountable body for funding audit to the LEP, including revolving Infrastructure Structure Fund, the Economic Development Funds, Growth Hub, Creative Scale programme, Careers and Energy Hubs, and match funding to those projects. In terms of Local Growth Assurance Framework, the terms of the delivery were agreed with the government in order to get those funds through the Local Growth Assurance Framework which set out the way the accountable body would operate. The Section 73 Officer of the LEP must make a periodic statement to government (last one was in February 2022) that the guidelines have been adhered to, and processes were compliant and suitably robust. The LEP Chair and Chief Executive were also required to produce and publish an annual government statement. The National Local Growth Assurance guidance required significant divergence from Approved Local Assurance Frameworks to be advised to the government and any adjustments that were made would need to be agreed between the accountable officers in the Combined Authority and the government. Patricia Greer added that she was one of the accountable officers and said that what was proposed today was not in line with what was agreed with the government, and therefore she would formally have to tell the government that the Authority were unable to continue to fulfil the requirements as set out in existing assurance framework. Patricia Greer concluded by strongly advising that this was not how to take decisions about huge sums of money and setting out a direction of travel.

Councillor Donald Davies felt that the elected members should be in the position to make the decision today and then write to the government to say that the arrangements have changed, and these meet the requirements.

Councillor Toby Savage commented that there was nothing in amended recommendations that would fundamentally change the arrangements with government, and there was nothing that would fundamentally change the system at all.

Councillor Kevin Guy commented four Joint Committee members would make a decision which would only be about looking at and developing something before bringing it back to the next meeting.

Metro Mayor said that this was of such significance and concerning. The region was in a desperate need for money for all the important projects that would need to happen, and that he was not prepared to just let this go by on the nod. Metro Mayor also said that would raise serious issues of concern financially for the West of England, and that he would invite the chairs of Audit and Overview & Scrutiny committees to consider these matters.

The amendments having been carried, the Joint Committee then voted on the substantive motion (i.e. the revised recommendations). Metro Mayor did not vote.

The Joint Committee **RESOLVED**:

- 1) The Joint Committee is to be re-established with new governance arrangements that make accountability clearer, and decision making more transparent. This includes the receipt of any relevant recommendations from the Local Enterprise Partnership Business Board, and any other relevant legacy matters that involve both the West of England Combined Authority area and the area of North Somerset Council.
- 2) Joint Committee will play its full role in the development of strategy for the West of England region as a whole, working with the LEP, Combined Authority and Western Gateway and other partners to advocate for the region with Government and other stakeholders.
- 3) That the four Unitary Authorities (Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council) agree to dissolve the existing Joint Committee arrangements subject to new Standing Orders being agreed by the Joint Committee, subject to Unitary Authority council governance processes.
- 4) To note the comments made by the Scrutiny and LEP Chairs, which will be considered as part of the report produced by Monitoring Officers setting out new standing orders which be considered at the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
- 5) Monitoring Officers will produce new standing orders which be considered at the next meeting of the Joint Committee. The new standing orders will include provisions which detail arrangements for the management of Joint Committee meetings and agenda setting; election of a chair; the co-production of reports; voting arrangements; the relationship with the Combined Authority; and the role of the Combined Authority Mayor.
- 6) One Front Door funding administrative arrangements should continue with regards to relevant funds such as the Economic Development Fund and Resolving Infrastructure Fund.
- 7) To ensure clearer accountability of the Joint Committee and in line with Quality Assurance Framework, approve the principle that for those funds that are the responsibility of the 4 Unitary Authorities, for example the Economic Development Fund reports, will be commissioned by the Committee and signed-off by Unitary Authority (UA) CEOs in partnership with the CEO of the LEP before publication.

- 8) Note the Government White Paper "Levelling Up the United Kingdom", published on 2 February 2022, proposes changes to the current framework for the governance and funding of LEPs. To welcome the agreement of the LEP Board to establish a working group, comprising representatives from the Combined Authority, the LEP, North Somerset and a representative from the three other Unitaries to consider options and proposals regarding the future governance of the LEP to bring before the respective bodies in the early summer.
- 9) Note the letter received from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities regarding 'Integrating Local Enterprise Partnerships into local democratic institutions' on 31st March 2022. Note that bespoke arrangements to maintain West of England LEP will need to be developed and welcome the opportunity to be engaged in the development of a preferred option.
- 10) To provide greater transparency and accountability the Joint Committee will produce an annual report which will detail its activities and set out its priorities for the year ahead. Regular updates are to be provided at Joint Committee meeting regarding the work of the Western Gateway including engagement with Government and other key stakeholders.
- 11) Good governance and accountability require that the West of England Joint Committee should have a clear and distinguishable identity, distinct from the Combined Authority. The Joint Committee is to establish its own online presence whereby committee reports, and decisions can be clearly accessed by the public. This will provide public access to the Joint Committee's standing orders and terms of reference to support the public's understanding of its role and purpose.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX ONE – PUBLIC STATEMENT

APPENDIX TWO – PUBLIC QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS