

COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE IN RESPECT TO ITEMS BEING CONSIDERED BY WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE ON 1 JULY 2022

General Comments:

The O&S Committee requested an earlier sight of Committee papers in order to properly scrutinise the reports. Ideally five clear working days publication prior to the Scrutiny meeting.

West of England Combined Authority Committee

Motion - from Mayor Norris (Item 9)

The O&S Committee stated that they did not believe that the Combined Authority could instruct the Avon Pension Fund to have a carbon neutral investment policy as it was governed by a strict set of rules from the financial regulators.

It was noted that some historic large fossil fuel companies have and are investing heavily in 'green' energy initiatives as they reorientate their businesses to net zero.

Investment Fund Programme (Item 10)

There was a concern about local ward councillors not being kept informed regarding schemes that affected their local areas, such as around the Northern Fringe.

The Committee also wished to highlight the current inflation rate and the possible effect this may have on the completion of projects.

The Committee particularly welcomed the IStart proposals and asked if there was anyone else doing this in the country.

Investment Fund - Change Requests (Item 11)

The Committee requested that reasons for delay in projects be highlighted although they acknowledged that sometimes the actual reasons were difficult to disentangle. They asked what roles members could take in challenging and understanding any delays.

City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement - Delivery Model (Item 12)

The Committee asked how the figure of £6m had been arrived at as the cut off point for delegation to the Director of Infrastructure. It was explained that in terms of the projects the large ones were above £6m and the smaller ones were under £6m.

Scrutiny was keen to play its part in the scrutiny and delivery of these projects and appreciated that capability needed to be built up in the meantime through for instance the appointment of project officers.

Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme (Item 13)

The committee welcomed all the background and market research that highlights what the current problems are. The Committee asked when a detailed action plan with milestones and accountability would be available and the answer was later in the year.

The Scrutiny Committee requests information from the UAs on how the supported bus services would be funded.

The Committee also requested clarity on the constitution of the EP Board where it seemed that First Bus will have two votes and each of the other four members will only have one vote.

The Committee also flagged that residential roads along bus routes are often saturated with parked cars as commuters caught buses for just the last part of their journeys.

UKSPF & Multiply (Item 14)

Whilst welcoming this proposal the Committee commented that it was underwhelmed by the amount of funding for this project and asked whether the region was getting its 'fair' share. It was

acknowledged that officers were investigating any match funding that may be available.

It was explained that these monies replaced the EU Structural funds that had been granted to economically deprived UK areas. Of the monies that the Combined Authority will be receiving spend will be prioritised to those areas in the region which have economic deprivation.

It was noted that 158,000 residents in our region live in neighbourhoods that rank in the most deprived fifth of places nationally.

West of England Combined Authority and Mayoral Budget Outturn Report (Item 15)

No specific comments.

Treasury Management Outturn Report 2021-22 (Item 16)

The Scrutiny Committee welcomed that the Authority had no external borrowing requirements and asked that the lending policy continue to be monitored by the Audit Committee, especially with borrowing rates on the increase.

Joint Committee

LEP & IBB Budget Outturn April-March 2022 (Item 9)

No specific comments.

Joint Committee Governance Review (Item 10)

The O&S Committee asked that they have a chance of inputting into the report and that they be consulted on any future intentions.

The Committee also signalled its intention that it wished to carry out some 'deep dives' on certain policy areas such as climate change initiatives and how the Authority's successes is being benchmarked against similar CA's elsewhere.