

DRAFT Minutes of the West of England Combined Authority Committee , Friday, 17 March 2023

Members:

Metro Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority
Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council
Cllr Toby Savage, South Gloucestershire Council

1	<p>EVACUATION PROCEDURE</p> <p>The evacuation procedure was set out.</p>
2	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Kevin Guy. Cllr Richard Samuel attended as his substitute.</p>
3	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest declared under the Localism Act 2011.</p>
4	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meetings held on 18 January 2023 and 27 January 2023 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.</p>
5	<p>CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The Chair announced that Jim Taylor from SOLACE would be in attendance and would be invited to address the Committee in relation to Agenda Item 15.</p>
6	<p>ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS, STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS)</p> <p>Thirteen questions from eight individuals had been received in advance of the meeting. The questions and responses from the Metro Mayor had been circulated and published on the Authority's website.</p> <p>In addition seventeen statements had been received from members of the public. The following members of the public were in attendance at the meeting and were invited to address the Committee for up to three minutes each on the topic of their statements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dave Redgwell 2. Andrew Smith 3. Ian Downey (on behalf of Jackie Head) 4. Brendan Taylor 5. Gavin Smith (on behalf of Martin Garrett) 6. Christina Biggs 7. Robbie Bentley (on behalf of Jevon Smith) 8. Ian Downey 9. Cllr Liz Hardman 10. Cllr David Wilcox (on behalf of Cllr Ed Plowden) 11. Matt Griffith 12. Cllr Emma Edwards
7	<p>COMMENTS FORM THE CHAIR OF THE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (LEP) BOARD</p> <p>Richard Bonner, the Chair of the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board, attended the meeting and was invited to put forward the Board's comments in relation to the agenda items to be considered. A summary of his comments are set out as below:</p> <p>MIPIM</p>

- Meetings with Office for Investment
- Engaged at UK Cities Event, sharing details of our Green Recovery Fund, sharing details of City Leap, the impact of Temple Quarter (impact on housing, transport connectivity, heart of economic growth (with University of Bristol enterprise campus)
- Session with Cllr Jane Mudd, and Liverpool City Region Mayor – Severn Estuary Tidal Energy as a global proposition. Meeting with Lord Johnson, Minister for Investment, celebrating our assets, including Hydrogen / Quantum Technology Innovation Centre, the wider University Investment, and Investment Opportunities at Temple Quarter. Le leveraging UKRI.
- Across all the city regions, there is a consistency that Infrastructure Investment, through effective transport networks, 5G, climate adaptation, economic and industrial strategies, and clear pipeline of investable propositions are all aligned to help address the challenges we have in addressing the inequalities in our communities, creating Thriving Places.

Climate & Ecological Strategy and Action Plan 2023

- I note the progress made and the scale of challenge the region faces to meet the West of England's 2030 ambitions for net zero and halting the decline in nature.
- I am pleased the LEP Board were consulted and informed the development of the 2023 Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan; and the strategy and actions recognise the need for businesses and partnership working to achieve regional ambitions
- I am pleased to see the vast majority of the Green Recovery Fund has successfully been awarded, and note the request of committee to expand it to £60m, including expanding funding for green skills to grow our green economy; and to expand the carbon survey offer to support more SMEs become more resilient to the impacts of energy prices and climate change

Investment Fund Programme

- Pleased to see the investment in Bath Central Riverside to further develop proposals to repurpose and regenerate this part of the Enterprise Zone.
- The scale of the ramping up of capacity required to deliver the step change levels of transport investment in the area through the £540m City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement should not be underestimated. The provision of further funding to the Councils to bring the resources and skills to help support project and programme management is welcomed, to ensure we fully grasp this opportunity.

Investment Fund Delivery Assurance

- It is noted that the Programme Review Board is now supporting the Committee in providing both support and constructive challenge to schemes with the Investment Fund programme. This should help drive project performance.
- It is noted that a number of scheme changes relate to the time limited Transforming Cities Fund which ends this month. It is critical that we are able to close out this programme and ensure no funding is at risk of being returned to Government.

West of England Combined Authority and Mayoral Budget Forecast Outturn 2022/23

- It is pleasing to see the ongoing success during the year in terms of attracting additional funding into the region.
- It is important that we continue to recognise that the West of England Combined Authority is changing and growing into an organisation set up to deliver the significant

programme of work ahead that will provide vital benefits for the economy, and ultimately the West of England residents and businesses.

- The LEP Board continues to be supportive and is keen to increase its engagement to provide a positive impact to the Combined Authority’s reputation with government, business, and residents.

Audit Action Plan: Feedback from Audit and Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Progress Report

- In December, Committee discussed the emerging Action Plan produced to respond to the Grant Thornton Audit Report and asked that Audit and Scrutiny Committees review and propose any revisions to the plan. I’m pleased to see that review has taken place.

- The Independent Peer Review Committee asked to be initiated has progressed at pace – I’ve been interviewed as part of that process along with a range of regional colleagues. I’m encouraged that this work has progressed swiftly and that the reviewers interim report is presented today.

- As the report rightly says – there is much to celebrate in the progress the CA has made since its inception. The report also notes areas where there is action to take to strengthen our partnership, and the LEP continue to be keen to engage and support as the report identifies.

- I’m pleased to see the update in the Committee Paper on action since December – while there are still steps for Committee to take, it is welcome to see that progress is being made to address the specific issues the external auditors highlighted and that the Independent Peer Review is helping to frame a wider set of action that I hope Committee can agree would benefit our ability to deliver the best we can for the region.

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

The Chair of the Authority’s Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Winston Duguid, attended the meeting and summarised that Committee’s comments on the agenda items. These comments had been circulated and published prior to the meeting.

9 COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY AUDIT COMMITTEE

Councillor Gollop, Chair of the West of England Combined Authority’s Audit Committee, addressed the meeting on the Audit Committee’s comments on the agenda items for consideration. These comments had been circulated and published prior to the meeting and covered the Committee’s concerns on the Value for Money (VfM) Action Plan and the Transport Risk Register.

In addition, Cllr Gollop asked to address the meeting in respect of agenda item 15 (Audit Action Plan), specifically the SOLACE report and his comments had been summarised under that item. He explained these comments had not been agreed by the members of the Audit Committee but had been his own views moderated to reflect a consensus view of the members of that Committee.

10 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2023

Metro Mayor Dan Norris introduced a report which highlighted the need for the West of England to work in partnership and to invest in bold actions to address these climate change challenges. The report updated the Committee on regional progress towards tackling the climate and ecological emergencies and sought approval to adopt a revised regional Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan (CESAP) 2023 and to expand the Green Recovery Fund (GRF) to £60m.

The following comments were made:

- Councillor Savage welcomed the progress set out in the report and specifically welcomed the tree canopy project and the Frome Valley River Reserve initiative. He further stated that he believed the key priorities for next year seemed right but he thought it would be useful to define the likely gap in meeting the 2030 emissions targets. He also felt that the region's coal mining heritage could help to potentially provide heating and hot water for schools, hospitals and public buildings. The Local Authority Support Advice service and stressed the importance that this be bolstered with Combined Authority funding;
- Councillor Savage stated that it was acknowledged that significant skills training would be needed to meet the region's climate targets, estimated at around 50,000 additional jobs which was a significant opportunity for SGS college and other regional training centres. SGS had trialled combining training with retrofitting and improving their own buildings which could be replicated elsewhere. He stated that a significant proportion of students lived outside the West of England area and many of the students lived in some of the most deprived areas of the region;
- Mayor Marvin Rees stated that the challenge was a scale and pace not encountered previously and authorities could not afford any missteps on making progress in this field. The evaluation programme should be constantly reviewed. He emphasised the importance of the different authorities working together on this challenge and pool resources where necessary to better coordinate while being mindful of duplication of efforts. Unlocking of private and public investment would be key. 3CI had identified significant funding opportunities. The urban summit was also looking at the future of cities and inputting how to decarbonise cities in the future. He said that the impacts of climate change often affected the most vulnerable who were also in danger of being 'structured out' of the economy so it was important that the right skills opportunities were in place. All jobs should be 'green' jobs;
- Mayor Marvin Rees also asked that a clarification be made on on-street EV charging as BCC wanted to proceed with charging hubs but did have reservations on lamppost charging. He asked that the allocation of money for this to BCC be confirmed;
- Councillor Richard Samuel focussed on the need for greater uptake on public transport as people needed a viable alternative to using their cars. In the region the viable alternative was mainly bus services. When the service was not reliable then they turned to their cars. He asked that more effort be put into this area in the future;
- Councillor Richard Samuel stated that his Council was about to introduce a charging trial. He welcomed the liveable neighbourhoods plan but should not underestimate the challenge of bringing the population with the proposals as they were mainly supportive of climate change initiatives as a principle but some of the policy implementation was not so popular once it inconvenienced them personally; In respect of housing retrofitting he explained that there were many listed buildings in Bath and North East Somerset which would be exceptionally difficult to bring up to modern energy efficiency standards. However it would be good to trial emerging technologies, with the support of the Bath Preservation Trust to do something innovative;

Metro Mayor Dan Norris thanked staff for securing the Great Avon Wood tree planting project.

The recommendations were moved by Metro Mayor Dan Norris and seconded by Councillor Toby Savage.

[Voting arrangements: Decision required majority agreement of Committee Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority) and including the West of England Combined Authority Mayor].

The West of England Combined Authority Committee unanimously **RESOLVED** to:

1. Note progress on Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan 2022 actions, as set out in Appendix 2.
2. Adopt the Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan 2023 as set out in Appendix 3.
3. Support expansion of the Green Recovery Fund by £10m to invest in priority projects that target the climate and ecological emergencies, including allocating £6m from the existing Combined Authority Investment Fund headroom as shown in Table 8.1 of this Report.
4. Note that, as part of the Green Recovery Fund expansion, further development work will take place to determine supply and demand for green construction skills, building on the Post 16 Education and Infrastructure Report and aligning with a refreshed West of England Employment and Skills Plan, with an update to come to June 2023 Committee meeting.

11

INVESTMENT FUND PROGRAMME

Metro Mayor Dan Norris introduced a report which proposed a number of new awards through the Investment Fund which included funding to develop proposals for employment, housing and cultural regeneration in the Central Riverside area with Bath's Enterprise Zone and funding to continue to develop a pipeline of walking and cycling schemes aligned to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

There was also an addendum to this report which included additional recommendations as a result of securing additional capital spending announced in the budget earlier in the week. This addendum had been published on the Authority's website. This was being dealt with as a matter of urgency as agreed with the chair of the Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It would allow the Authority to move forward to the delivery phase of the £18m in the current financial year including funding for the Bath Quays development, the South Bristol Light Industrial Workspace in Hartcliffe, supporting innovation at two of the region's universities and improving premises and providing new equipment across the region's colleges. The Interim Acting Chief Executive explained that this arose from an underspend in the government department and news had been embargoed until the government's budget day a couple of days before this meeting.

In addition the Department for Transport had announced additional funding for maintaining and improving the highway network totalling £2,828,400 to the Combined Authority. This was proposed to be passported to the relevant West of England UAs in line with proportions agreed for the Highways Maintenance Capital Grant.

The recommendations were moved by Metro Mayor Dan Norris and seconded by

Councillor Toby Savage.

The following comments were raised:

- Mayor Marvin Rees commented that the CRSTS had financial support to South Gloucestershire and Bath & North East Somerset but because of the discussions on BCC's transport team incorporation into the Combined Authority Bristol would not get access to these funds. He asked that before this is finalised this be looked at. In addition he stated that this was an exciting time for the region as politician's were all lined up to deliver a solution of the climate crises with an opportunity to plan for the long term, including transport solutions and to explore future options such as Trams. He reminded the meeting that the night time economy included shift workers trying to travel home with collectively asking for government money to tackle local transport solutions;
- Councillor Richard Samuel stated that this represented good intent. He elaborated on the Bath Quays development and welcomed the proposals. He stated that works in the urban centre of Bath were notoriously difficult and the proposals would make a positive difference;
- Councillor Savage welcomed the Feasibility and Development Funding application for CRSTS South Gloucestershire Council Specialist Support as set out in paragraph 2.6. He also welcomed the opportunity for a long term strategic review of transport solutions as a high quality public transport network for vital for the region.

[Voting Arrangements: Decision required majority agreement of Committee Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority) and including the West of England Combined Authority Mayor.

The West of England Combined Authority Committee unanimously **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve the Strategic Outline Case for Bath Central Riverside and the award of £548k to develop the masterplan by March 2025, as set out in paragraph 2.6.
2. Approve the funding application for Walking and Cycling Scheme Development for completion by March 2025 and the award of £200k as set out in paragraph 2.6.
3. Approve the Feasibility and Development Funding application for CRSTS South Gloucestershire Council Specialist Support and the award of £670k as set out in paragraph 2.6.
4. Approve the allocation of up to £670k for CRSTS resourcing in Bath and North East Somerset Council and delegate the approval of the detail through a Feasibility and Development Funding application to the Combined Authority Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Directors of Infrastructure of the constituent Councils, as set out in paragraph 2.6.
5. Amend the approved capital programme for individual project approvals agreed at the January Committee and within this report, as set out in appendix 2.
6. To note that a provision of £4m has been set aside to manage programme risks as set out in paragraph 2.8.
7. The Committee endorses and approves the approach for the £18.75m DLUHC in-year capital funding as set out in the supplementary report;
8. That the additional DfT Pothole Funding for 2023/24 be passported to the relevant

West of England Unitary Authorities in line with proportions agreed for the Highways Maintenance Capital Grant as set out in the supplementary report.

[recommendations 7 & 8 had been set out in the addendum].

12 INVESTMENT FUND DELIVERY ASSURANCE

Metro Mayor Dan Norris introduced a report paper seeking approval for a number of changes to schemes within the Investment Fund programme. The suggested changes had already been approved, having been reviewed and endorsed by the Programme Review Board which was set up to help drive the delivery of projects and good practice.

The recommendations were moved by Metro Mayor Dan Norris and seconded by Mayor Marvin Rees.

[Voting arrangements: The decision required majority agreement of Committee Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority) and including the West of England Combined Authority Mayor.

The West of England Combined Authority Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the change requests for schemes within the current programme as set out in Appendix 1.

13 INDICATIVE MEETINGS TIMETABLE 2023/2024 AND MANAGING THE PERIOD PRIOR TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

Metro Mayor Dan Norris introduced a report which asked for endorsement of the provisional Timetable of Meetings for 2023/2024 to enable the appropriate planning of meetings to take place in accordance with Standing order A8.1. In accordance with Standing Order A7.1, the paper also sought agreement to set 16 June 2023 as the date for the West of England Combined Authority Committee Annual Meeting.

Also, as some councils were about to enter their pre-election period, which would start on the Monday following this meeting, the paper sought to put in place 'provisional and prudent' arrangements to allow for emergency decision-making should the need arise during the period between the date of the election on 4 May 2023, and the Annual Meeting.

The recommendations were moved by Metro Mayor Dan Norris and seconded by Councillor Richard Samuel.

Mayor Rees stated that there may be constitutional changes needed as a result of SOLACE's work and it was important that this be aligned.

[Voting Arrangements: Decision required unanimous agreement of Committee Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority) and including the West of England Combined Authority Mayor.

The West of England Combined Authority Committee **RESOLVED:**

1. That the indicative Timetable of Meetings for 2023/2024 as set out in Appendix 1 be

endorsed for formal agreement by the West of England Combined Authority Committee at its Annual Meeting in June 2023, subject to any changes arising following consultation.

2. That the date of the Annual Meeting of the West of England Combined Authority Committee be agreed as 16 June 2023.
3. That the Interim Acting Chief Executive be delegated the authority to act, at his discretion, in response to any matter requiring decision prior to the Annual Meeting, subject to no objections by the Chief Executive Officers of the Constituent Councils.

14

WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY AND MAYORAL BUDGET FORECAST OUTTURN 2022/23

Metro Mayor Dan Norris presented a paper setting out the financial revenue forecast information for the financial year 2022/23 based on data for the period April 2022 to January 2023, and which sought approval of a programme of efficiency reviews and risk-based financial reserve policy for the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority.

The recommendations were moved by Metro Mayor Dan Norris and seconded by Councillor Toby Savage.

Councillor Savage moved an additional recommendation (4) as follows:

“4. As the agreed 2-month bus extensions across the region are being put in place, costs are reported to be rising in excess of the funding requested and set aside by UA councils to support these services. Accordingly, the committee is recommended to reduce the planned £785k contribution to the Treasury Reserve (see Appendix 2) at year end to cover the cost increases on such routes (including to school services), with the view that this is replenished into the Treasury Reserve in due course by the efficiencies to come forward from the ongoing review”.

This additional recommendation was seconded by Councillor Richard Samuel.

The Acting Interim Chief Executive stated that there were issues in that additional monies would further deplete the Authority’s reserves which were already at a low level compared with other Combined Authorities and were currently rated as inadequate on a number of measures. He appreciated the financial pressures due to inflation and other demands that the Unitary Authorities were experiences and reiterated that supported bus services had been costed on price per passenger journey and funding was primarily provided by unitary authorities and had seen a significant price increase, in some cases three times higher. Officers had also not had an opportunity to fully assess the proposals set out in the amendment.

Councillor Savage responded by saying that the difficult situation could be resolved by providing a smoother transition to Demand Responsive Transport. It was now too late for the Unitary Authorities to meet the increase in costs as their budgets had been set and the election period was beginning and decisions for extending contracts would

need to be made today. Therefore this was the only route available for a decision to be made to extend supported services. He did not believe that reserves would be impacted in the medium term as the efficiencies review would be concluded later in the year but this was an opportunity to temporarily meet a shortfall. He stated that the unitary authorities had already contributed additional funding for supported buses.

The Section 73 Officer urged caution due to the situation with the reserves and could not recommend support for drawing further on the reserves in this way. Although there was work being carried out on efficiency savings the Combined Authority also had to be mindful of the overall risk factor that further depleting reserves would entail. Councillor Richard Samuel stated that he agreed that the time had passed where for the Unitary Authorities to draw on additional monies. He explained that the UAs had already added more resources to extending the transition period on some supported bus routes sometimes at the detriment of existing transport reserves. He stated that all organisations were in the same situation with diminishing reserves and funds. He stated that the DRT roll-out would be delayed so additional funds are needed as set out in this amendment. He therefore supported this amendment.

The Acting Interim Chief Executive stated that there was a significant change in accounting practice due where changes in value in pooled funds would be taken through profit and loss accounts from 2025/26. Under these rules, at today's fund values, it would mean that the treasury reserves would be wiped out and smaller reserves would have to be drawn on. The Authority will need to account for these changes under IFRS9.

Metro Mayor Dan Norris stated that he believed that the Unitary Authorities could still make necessary decisions during the pre-election period and stated that he would not be supporting the amendment. Councillor Samuel stated that he did not believe it would be possible for the full Council meetings to make the necessary decisions to increase the budget spending in this way prior to the election.

Councillor Savage reiterated that this was the 'drop-down' date on which contracts could be extended therefore this meeting would be the last opportunity to make such an opportunity. He also stated that the accounting practice change had already been postponed twice and could be extended again. He confirmed that today's meeting had been the first proper opportunity to address the matter.

On being put to a vote the amendment was supported by Councillor Savage and Councillor Samuel. Metro Mayor Dan Norris voted against. Mayor Marvin Rees abstained. Therefore the amendment was not approved.

The meeting then discussed the substantive

[Voting arrangements: Decision required majority agreement of Committee Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority) and including the West of England Combined Authority Mayor].

The West of England Combined Authority Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Review and comment on the Mayoral Fund revenue budget and forecast as detailed in

Appendix 1.

2. Review and comment on the Combined Authority revenue budget and forecast as detailed in Appendix 2.
3. Approve that the Combined Authority undertake a line-by-line budget review on all funding programmes with progress to be reported back to the Committee in June 2023.

15

AUDIT ACTION PLAN: FEEDBACK FROM AUDIT AND OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND PROGRESS REPORT

This report set out progress and next steps on the Combined Authority's route to improvement following the external audit report from Grant Thornton and the emerging action plan in response discussed by the Combined Authority Committee in December 2022. The report:

- Set out the progress on phase 1 of the Solace peer challenge review of the action plan including Terms of Reference and themes of the response. The independent reviewer will attend the committee to present his phase 1 findings.
- set out feedback from the Audit Committee on the emerging action plan as set out in appendix 4.
- requested formal approval of the emerging action plan in the light of feedback, as set out in appendix 3.
- provided an update on progress against the emerging action plan since December, as set out in table 1.

Jim Taylor, SOLACE, was in attendance for this item. SOLACE's independent review, dated February 2023, had been published on the Authority's website alongside the agenda papers for this Committee.

Jim Taylor made the following points:

- There were five themes that encompassed the report. Firstly what was the purpose and role of the Authority. He stated that there should be a facilitated discussion on this issue;
- Secondly he mentioned strategy. Following the establishment of a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) the economy had moved on, and it was now appropriate to broaden out into a regional industrial and economic plan which would give a codified message;
- The third theme was around partners. There was an opportunity now to explore how to work better together;
- Fourthly was around process and exploring some key opportunities, some suggestions were in the report;
- Lastly was around the constitution it was appropriate to refine the constitution.

Councillor Geoff Gollop addressed the meeting and made the following points:

- He welcomed the SOLACE report which had been circulated with the Committee papers and congratulated the thoroughness of the report;
- He stated that there had been anger and frustration from backbench members who had felt that the Authority had played for time, he therefore urged actions to be taken as quickly as possible;
- He endorsed the recommendations and asked for each member of the Committee to

confirm that they will work within the five principles set out and work together to resolve differences before public meetings;

- He suggested that SOLACE be asked to prioritise the necessary work and identify which actions can be taken 'in house' with delegations to the Interim Acting Chief Executive prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and while some of the constituent authorities were in election periods.

Metro Mayor Dan Norris stated that he appreciated that there had been some timing issues in relation to timetabling of meetings.

The recommendations were moved by Metro Mayor Dan Norris and seconded by Mayor Marvin Rees.

The following points were raised:

- Councillor Savage thanked Cllr Gollop and the Audit Committee's work in the area. He stated that he was happy to endorse the principles contained in SOLACE's report. He asked when the updated management structure would be submitted to the Committee for comment. The Interim Acting Chief Executive stated that some work had already been undertaken but no dates had yet been set, it was planned to bring some proposals on implementation dates to the Committee meeting in June 2023;
- Councillor Savage also asked about forward plan work and asked when this would be available. The Interim Acting Chief Executive stated that some work had been done with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee. Councillor Savage asked that a draft be circulated when ready;
- Councillor Savage also requested information on the protocol. The Interim Director of Law and Governance confirmed this had been published on the website; Councillor Savage thanked the report author for his work on the Independent Review. He stated that Members did need to come together to agree the shared objectives for the region. He was proud of the work the region's politicians undertook to reach a devolution deal although he stated that the region had been slow to revisit to agree a new shared vision for the West of England. He thanked Jim Taylor for the work that had gone on in trying to smooth relationships within the region;
- Councillor Samuel said that there were few surprises in the report and the praised the high standard of SOLACE's work. He stated that the Combined Authorities all had slightly different roles and powers and would need to be adapted as they grew. He urged that the recommendations be properly implemented. He reminded the meeting of the resources that were at stake with increasing finances leading to increasing organisational complexity. He hoped that there would be a clearer idea of how to move forward by the time of the next Committee meeting in June 2023;
- Mayor Marvin Rees stated that he was also happy to accept and endorse the principles contained therein. He welcomed the timely intervention which gave space to explore the Authority's purpose, role and direction in today's context. In terms of recommendation (g) he stated that leadership was about whole range of partners coming together. The nature of the leadership of political and business leaders was important when making case for funding to government. Awareness of political and financial consequences could be severe if the recommendations were not implemented and asked that implementation dates were added to the recommendations;
- Mayor Marvin Rees further stated that the functions of the Combined Authority affected people's lives and this was an opportunity to bring in key partners such as health services, fire services, voluntary sector etc to see what their hopes were and what they could offer;
- Richard Bonner addressed the meeting on this item and stated that the political

landscape meant that devolution would be increased in the future. This would lead to significant opportunities and responsibilities from greater powers and funding and asked that the Combined Authority prepare itself for these opportunities. He also stated that a clear plan and clear strategy were necessary to attract business and investment into the region and encourage private sector funding;

[Voting arrangements: the decision required majority agreement of Committee members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority) and including the West of England Combined Authority Mayor].

The West of England Combined Authority Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Consider feedback from the Audit and Overview & Scrutiny Committees and approve the action plan as a living document that will continue to be refined as work continues.
2. Note progress in delivering the emerging action plan.
3. Agree in principle the broad areas as set out in paragraph 2.3 and presented by the Solace peer reviewer, and delegate to the Combined Authority Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Executives of the Unitary Authorities, to incorporate into the action plan as appropriate.

16

COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE CONSTITUTIONAL UPDATE

Metro Mayor Dan Norris introduced a report recommending that all legal advice be overseen or commissioned in accordance with the Monitoring Officer's requirements. This would ensure that the kind of confusion that had previously arisen when conflicting legal advice was commissioned by officers in the autumn of 2021 would not occur. The change was already what the Authority was doing in practice but would now be set out formally in the Authority's constitution as a result of this formal decision.

It was noted that the Monitoring Officer's protocol was published on the Authority's website here:

<https://westofengland-ca.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s5397/MonitoringOfficerProtocol.docx.pdf>

The recommendations were moved by Metro Mayor Dan Norris and seconded by Councillor Richard Samuel.

Councillor Savage supported the recommendation and recognised that this was an important change and reflected the concerns raised by the auditors. He stated that this was the first steps in updating the Authority's constitution and awaited any further proposals as part of the peer review work being undertaken by SOLACE.

[Voting arrangements: Decision required unanimous agreement of Committee Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority) and including the West of England Combined Authority Mayor.]

The West of England Combined Authority Committee **RESOLVED** that an additional paragraph 3.8 (e) be added to the functions of the Monitoring Officer in the Authority's

constitution:

(e) Combined Authority Officers and Members are prohibited from obtaining legal advice without the written agreement of the Combined Authority Monitoring Officer. All legal services will be commissioned in accordance with arrangements settled by the Monitoring Officer from time to time. These arrangements will be set out in a legal services protocol which will be published on the authority's internet.

Signed:

Date: