

**West of England Combined Authority
West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Monday, 2 October 2023, 12.52pm
70 Redcliff Street
70 Redcliff Street, Bristol, BS1 6AL

Present:

Cllr Ed Plowden, Bristol City Council
Cllr Katy Grant, Bristol City Council
Cllr Jonathan Hucker, Bristol City Council
Cllr Tim Kent, Bristol City Council

Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council
Cllr Ben Randles, South Gloucestershire Council

**Present from North Somerset Council
(observers)**

Cllr Nigel Ashton

Officers In Attendance:

Richard Ennis, Interim Acting Chief Executive
Daniel Dickinson, Interim Monitoring Officer
Jill Bennett, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager
Bob Scowen, Transport Consultant
Phil Wright, Public Transport Programme Manager
Malcolm Parsons, Head of Capital delivery
Selonge Russell, Head of Finance and Procurement
Pete Davis, Head of Grant Management and Assurance
Roger Hoare, Head of Environment
Stephen Bashford, Director of Business and Skills
Stephen Hathaway, Programme Manager
Rachel Musson, Interim Director of Investment and Corporate Services

Apologies:

Cllr Alison Streatfeild-James, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr David Addison, South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr Ciaran Cronnelly, North Somerset Council (Observer)

Minutes

1	Evacuation Procedure The evacuation procedure was noted
2	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Councillors Streatfeild-James and Addison. The Monitoring Officer advised that as the Committee was meeting with less than the number of members present to be quorate decisions could be ratified by the Committee and endorsed by the next meeting.
3	Declarations of Interest under the Localism Act 2011 Cllr Kent declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as the report at agenda item 14 of the Combined Authority Committee references a road improvement plan on Hengrove Lane, where he resides. He also declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 12 of

	<p>the Combined Authority Committee having been employed as a consultant for solar farms but noted it was not within the region.</p> <p>Cllr Plowden declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as Director of the National Cycle network – Sustrans.</p>
4	<p>Minutes</p> <p>Councillor Kent proposed an amendment to the minutes to read that he was ‘invited to speak as part of the public forum but was prevented from doing so’.</p> <p>The Chair proposed that this be amended to read: ‘Councillor Kent was prevented from speaking at part of the public forum but was invited to speak and present his statement under item 11 of the agenda’.</p> <p>Having not reached an agreement, it was agreed that a form of word be drafted for agreement at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.</p> <p>Resolved: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 8 September 2023 were deferred to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they could not be ratified due to the meeting being inquorate.</p>
5	<p>Chair's Announcements</p> <p>The Chair noted he was satisfied that North Somerset Councillors (listed as observers) would by convention, have speaking roles at the Committee.</p> <p>Following the discussions at the previous meeting, a training programme for Audit and Scrutiny members from Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) was being costed and it was anticipated that this would involve a day’s commitment from members.</p> <p>As the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny would be given the opportunity to make comments on behalf of the Committee at the Combined Authority Committee on the 6th October 2023, feedback would be noted during the meeting, for presenting at the Committee.</p>
6	<p>Items from the Public (Questions, Statements and Petitions)</p> <p>The Chair noted that ten questions had been submitted by members of the public. Written responses had been provided and are available on the website.</p> <p>The following people submitted their statements and were given the opportunity to address the Committee;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr David Redgewell • Mrs Bobby Oliver • Francis Bennett • Mandy Parry • Robbie Bentley • Rosa Kell <p>Following the statements given, the Chair noted that whilst bus franchising was not specifically an item for consideration on the agenda for the Combined Authority Committee on the 6 October 2023. However, given the level of public interest in the report commissioned into bus franchising for West of England Combined Authority feedback to the Committee would be given noting requests from the public that the report be published as early as possible.</p>

	<p>He further noted that public feedback had firmly alluded to the fact that poor public transport should be viewed as a public health and equality issue which he would also include in his feedback to the Combined Authority Committee.</p>
7	<p>Review of Items for 6 October 2023 West of England Combined Authority & West of England Joint Committee</p> <p>The Interim Monitoring Officer introduced the report which provided the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with a list of the reports due to be considered at the 6 October 2023 meetings of the West of England Combined Authority Committee and the West of England Joint Committee.</p> <p>Report authors and other relevant officers gave a brief summary of their reports:</p> <p><u>Delivery Assurance:</u></p> <p>A letter was being drafted by the Chair of the Committee and would be circulated to all the Chairs of Scrutiny in the Unitary Authorities, to ensure a co-ordinated oversight of any anticipated delays to projects delegated to their respective authorities.</p> <p>It was encouraging to see that capacity- building was happening across both delivery and project staffing and noted the Committee were also encouraged by the rigor in identifying issues and potential slippages of projects.</p> <p>Common themes or issues surrounding the delays should be flagged early with an accessible dashboard of information and exception reporting that could be shared across all these arrangements. There may be a need to look at capacity across the region for contractor availability to ensure sound programme management was in place.</p> <p><u>Climate and Ecological Strategy and Action Plan Update</u></p> <p>Specific carbon metrics need to be given consideration in every aspect of decision making across all the Unitary Authorities and the Combined Authority; need to be able to measure climate impact.</p> <p>Continued political pressure needs to be applied to National Grid to help address the significant delays and shift towards de-carbonisation and more renewable energy. The Climate Emergency Action Plan is an extensive, comprehensive plan; it would be beneficial to see a dashboard or grading system where focus was placed on the significant impacts being.</p> <p>Whilst the larger corporate bodies were mostly committed to this, it was positive that a lot of Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) were also engaged in their commitment to tackling climate change.</p> <p><u>Adult Education and Skills</u></p> <p>Some concern that the Combined Authority were unable to forecast funding allocation for 2024/25 under the new Adult Skills Fund as the Department for Education had not yet confirmed regional allocations.</p> <p>Needs to be a continuation in the investment for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan and those with special educational needs support needing assistance as young adults, transition into employment.</p> <p><u>Transport Infrastructure Projects</u></p> <p><u>CRSTS</u></p> <p>Some concern about the deliverability of the CRSTS even with the re-scope of the programme and questions were raised whether keeping the M32 programme was achievable,</p>

	<p>given that the M32 programme was expensive with a high degree of risk. The A4 corridor programme was progressing well and that the longer-term vision would potentially form part of a future programme and reassurance was given that this would be aligned with the Future4West programme.</p> <p><u>Future4West:</u> Some concerns about the lack of a carbon analysis despite a substantial amount of work already having taken place. Assurance was given that a Carbon Assessment Toolkit was in development.</p> <p>There was a need to focus on realistic options that would prove to be future-proof and viable; there needed to be a clear commitment to reducing car-dependency and an changing the demands of reliance on cars. Reassurance was given that the additional time and effort in exploring all options was relatively small which would ensure that the assessment was adequately robust.</p> <p>Having listened to the members of the public address the Committee, it was evident that people wanted short term solutions to their public transport needs as the withdrawal of services had had a significant detrimental impact on their lives.</p> <p><u>BSIP</u> Concerns raised about Westlink and whether there could be a review of the boundaries including the pace and scale at which this could be done. Boundary review was being done at speed and the traffic commissioner also gave some clarification on the amount of times mini-buses could be driven in the various zones and work as being undertaken to urgently address this.</p> <p><u>Transformation Programme:</u> Some concerns that there had been no operational changes within the Constitution which may create a culture of mistrust</p> <p><u>West of England Combined Authority and Mayoral Budget Forecast 2023/24 Report</u> Despite there being a predication of a surplus, concerns were raised about the level of reserves being comparatively low. We note that supplies and services appear under profile due to additional in-year income.</p>
8	<p>Verbal update on the BSIP Task and Finish Group The Chair updated the Committee and explained that a BSIP Task and Finish Group had been help on the 8th September 2023 and a further one arranged for the 9th October 2023. One of the main outcomes of the discussion was that the price of the tenders had increased significantly and the extension to 2026 meant that there would be little prospect of introducing new supported services. A performance dashboard for each month on BSIP would be made available to the members of the Task and Finish Group.</p>
9	<p>Overview and Scrutiny - Work Programme The content of the work programme was noted.</p>
10	<p>Feedback Section Officers were thanked for their attendance and presentations to the Committee.</p> <p>The Chair requested early oversight of future Combined Authority Committee reports.</p>
	<p>Friday, 8 December 2023, 12.00 pm, 70 Redcliff Street, Bristol BS1 6AL</p>