

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

Friday, 8 September 2023, 12noon – 2pm
70 Redcliff Street, Bristol BS1 6AL

Present:

Cllr David Addison, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Mark Bradshaw, 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 Ed Plowden, Bristol City Council
Cllr Ben Randles, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Alison Streatfeild-James, Bath and North East Somerset Council

Officers In Attendance:

Daniel Dickinson, Interim Monitoring Officer
Jill Bennett, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager
Jess Lee, Head of Policy and Strategy
Mark Wakefield, Head of Democratic Services
Emma Powley, Democratic Services (Virtual)

Apologies:

None

Minutes

As this was the first meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for Municipal Year 2023/24 the clerk opened the meeting and presided over agenda items 1-3

1	<p>Election of Chair for Municipal Year 2023/24 It was proposed by Councillor Bradshaw and seconded by Councillor Streatfeild- James and</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <p>That Councillor Plowden be elected as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the Municipal 2023/24.</p> <p>Councillor Plowden was in the Chair for all subsequent items.</p>
2	<p>Election of Vice-Chair for Municipal Year 2023/24 Councillor MacFie proposed and Councillor Addison seconded and it was</p> <p>Agreed</p> <p>that Councillor Streatfeild-James be appointed Vice- Chair.</p>
3	<p>Declarations of Interest under the Localism Act 2011 There were none.</p>
4	<p>Terms of Reference The Committee noted its Terms of Reference.</p>

5	<p>Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on the 13 March 2023 were agreed.</p>
6	<p>Chair's Announcements The Chair informed the Committee that a request to call in the decision to close railway ticket offices including Bath had been received. As this is not a decision made by the Combined Authority Committee, scrutiny has no remit to call it in. The Chair commented that he would ask the Mayor of the West of England Combined Authority to express their concern about the closures</p> <p>The Chair thanked officers for their attendance and the overall organisation who had committed to looking at the provision of extra capacity to assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with additional deep dives.</p>
7	<p>Items from the Public (Questions, Statements and Petitions) The Chair noted that six questions had been submitted by members of the public. Written responses had been provided and are available on the website.</p> <p>Mr David Redgewell submitted a statement but was unable to attend. Robbie Bentley instead made the address on Mr Redgewell's behalf.</p> <p>Sheila Roberts submitted a statement on behalf of the Bristol Disability Equities Forum and read this out at the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair thanked those in attendance for their questions and statements and commented that whilst Overview and Scrutiny did not have any power or remit with regards to the topics discussed, they may wish to submit their comments and questions to the Combined Authority Committee who were the decision-making body.</p>
8	<p>Regional Strategy Refresh The Chair introduced the Head of Policy and Strategy (Jess Lee) to the meeting who gave the Committee an update on the process underway to refresh the regional strategy. It was explained that the Combined Authority last produced a regional strategy in 2019 with the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) being co-produced between the region and government. Since publication, there had been significant regional and national change and it was agreed following a meeting with the Leaders of the Unitary Authorities and the Mayor that a regional refresh was necessary in order to deliver the refreshed strategy. Numerous workstreams were currently proceeding.</p> <p>It was noted that there had been a number of deep dives carried out and a Peer Review had been requested alongside engagement with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) Boards, Business Leaders and Young People.</p> <p>In response to question asked by the Committee, the Head of Policy and Strategy clarified:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Regional Strategy Refresh was not a planning document but would provide the context for what is being done across the region and would help to implement strategy. 2. The Combined Authority were not alone in re-visiting the regional strategy; other Authorities were seeking to refresh theirs. Work was also being commissioned with other Combined Authorities to explore ways to lever in more money and maximize the impact of the capital received. 3. Once the engagement plan was in place, there would be further consultation with

Councillors, and officers, from all the Unitary Authorities,

4. It was recognised that whilst the area had high skills base, the overall net migration out of the area meant that there were some skill shortages. Work would be undertaken to try and retain some of the skilled worked by engaging with the regional Universities and Colleges ensuring that opportunities are made visible.

The Chair thanked the officer for her report and commented that he was pleased with the vision and framework for the delivery of the Regional Strategy Refresh. He noted he welcomed the peer review and asked for further engagement and consultation with Councillors prior to it being approved.

Resolved:

That the Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the approach being taken to the development of a refreshed regional strategy

9

Transformation Programme Governance Workstream Update

Daniel Dickinson, Interim Monitoring Officer, introduced his report which provided the Committee with an update on progress with the actions in the governance work stream of the Transformation Programme following the agreement at the informal meeting of Scrutiny on the 7 July 2023 that three additional meetings would take place, providing an opportunity for deep dives on some key themes.

It was explained that the report provided an overview of actions in the governance and structures workstream, a number of the actions that fit within this workstream were completed before the transformation programme was established.

The Monitoring Officer gave an update in relation to Figure 1 - Governance and Structures Workstream and noted the following:

GS1 – Revisions to the Schemes of Delegations would be proposed at the Combined Authority Committee in October 2023 before a more substantive overhaul would be carried out.

GS2 – All Committee’s would have clear Terms of Reference and a training programme offered.

GS3 - Through discussions on role and purpose of the West of England Combined Authority, the question of Leader portfolios can be considered as and when appropriate.

GS4 - this had been implemented very quickly with a much more free flow of information to ensure that Cabinet Members from UAs can request briefings from senior CA officers as required.

GS5 – The Regional Monitoring Officers had continued to meet regularly, with networks having been built with other Combined Authorities Monitoring Officers.

GS6 - Material would be provided to new members as part of their induction process and all members will be offered the opportunity to meet with CA officers to discuss the role of Audit and Scrutiny Committees.

In response to questions asked by the Committee, the following was noted:

In relation to GS3, the structure of the Combined Authority differed from Unitary Authorities.

	<p>Portfolio Holders could attend meetings of the Combined Authority but only as observers and would therefore have no voting powers.</p> <p>In relation to GS2, questions had previously been raised about making the Terms of Reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit Committee more defined so as to avoid any overlap and duplication.</p> <p>In relation to GS4, there is a weekly meeting of the CEO's of the Unitary and Combined Authorities. Any briefing requests made by the respective Authorities Portfolios would be discussed and considered at the meeting.</p> <p>A future peer review would be undertaken to assess what progress had been made and what improvements can be continued.</p> <p>The Chair commented that he considered there to be some operational and constitutional weakness and asked for more clarity of the approval routes to ensure that everyone was clear on the tolerances</p> <p>The monitoring Officer explained that the general principles around decision making needed to be flexible enough to allow the Combined Authority to deliver its commitments whilst also having a robust process in place to ensure that decision making was open and transparent. It was noted that some of the financial authorisation limits had changed due to the Internal Governance Process.</p> <p>Resolved: That the report be noted.</p>
10	<p>Operation of Overview & Scrutiny Committee The Head of Democratic Services (Mark Wakefield) elaborated on this report that sought Committee Members views for proposals to be brought forward to ensure the Committee is operating an effective scrutiny function on behalf of the Combined Authority. It was explained that at the 7 July 2023 meeting there was a clear request for papers for the regular O&S meetings to be circulated much earlier. It was also noted that there had been investment in the Team with the appointment of the Democratic and Scrutiny Manager to help facilitate additional workload of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the report.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer reminded the Committee that that each Task and Finish Group would need to nominate a Chair that a remit and the scope of each group would need to be reported back to the next informal scrutiny meetings.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to the following Task and Finish Groups and membership.</p> <p>Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Scope to include: Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) roll out BSIP- questions about the monitoring of delivery of BSIP Figures needed on passenger numbers</p> <p>Councillors Addison, Randles, Bradshaw, Streatfeild-James, Kent and Plowden.</p> <p>Audit & Governance Task and Finish Group; Councillors Streatfeild-James, Gollop and Randles.</p>

Transport;

Councillors Bradshaw, Kent, Addison and Randles

Skills and Business;

Councillor Hucker, MacFie, Bradshaw and Massey

Climate change and Environment

Councillors Randles, Grant, Bradshaw, MacFie and Streatfeild-James.

The representative from Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) gave a presentation to the Committee.

Monday, 2 October 2023, 10.30 am, 70 Redcliff Street