

# **DRAFT**

## **Minutes of the West of England Joint Committee , Friday, 26 January 2024**

Members:

Cllr Mike Bell, North Somerset Council  
Cllr Claire Young, South Gloucestershire Council

1	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>The Chair, Cllr Mike Bell, welcomed everybody to the meeting which commenced at 5:02pm at the MShed. The following apologies had been received:</p> <p>Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council.</p>
2	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest declared under the Localism Act 2011. The Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership Board, Richard Bonner, stated that he believed that his published register of interests was up-to-date.</p>
3	<p><b>MINUTES</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.</p>
4	<p><b>CHAIR ANNOUNCEMENTS</b></p> <p>There were no announcements from the Chair.</p>
5	<p><b>ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC</b></p> <p>Two 2 questions had been received from Members of the Public. The responses to these questions had been circulated to Members of the Committee and published on the Authority's website.</p> <p>In addition 7 statements had been received. These had been circulated and published on the Authority's website. The following members of the public attended the meeting and addressed the Committee on the topic of their statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Redgewell</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>COMMENTS FROM CHAIR OF LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP</b></p> <p>Richard Bonner, the Chair of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board, addressed the meeting. He noted the overall LEP Revenue Grant Funding that had been attracted into the region was now circa £24m over the Medium-Term Financial Strategy period. The West of England Office agreement that underpinned the LEP dealt with the risk sharing mechanisms between the relevant councils, although he noted that there was uncertainty moving forward on the shape and structure of this agreement. He stated that failure to deliver Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) integration following the government's decision to withdraw central government support for LEPs from April 2024 and transfer their functions to local and Combined Authorities was a fundamental risk.</p>
7	<p><b>COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY'S OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b></p> <p>Cllr Ed Plowden, Chair of the Authority's Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee addressed the meeting. He stated that the Local Enterprise Partnership Board should be part of the work looking into the role and purpose of the Combined Authority, especially as part of the Task</p>

and Finish Groups that were in existence.

**8 COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY'S AUDIT COMMITTEE**

No comments were made.

**9 LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BUDGET SETTING REPORT - 2024/2025**

The Joint Committee was asked to consider and approve the Budget in respect of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Invest Bristol and Bath (IBB) for 2024/25. Including the revenue and capital forecast for the financial year 2023/24 based on data from the period April 2023 to December 2023. Change request approvals were also included as part of this reporting process.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Mike Bell and seconded by Cllr Claire Young.

Cllr Claire Young asked whether recommendations (6) & (8) could be amended so that in the absence of agreement between CEOs the decision be escalated to Joint Committee. The Authority's Interim Monitoring Officer advised that he believed that such a change would not be legally sound. The Committee asked that further advice be given in this matter.

The Authority's Interim Chief Executive informed the meeting that the Authority was working hard to make sure that the business community had a future voice in discussions with the Authority and the Joint Committee. The government had provided some additional funding in order that an agreement could be reached on LEP integration by 9 February 2024.

Cllr Bell stated that he was keen to see agreement be reached so that relationships with the local business community were not undermined or future government investment was not put at risk.

[Voting Arrangements:

- Recommendations 1,2,4,6,8: To be determined by a majority of those Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority).
- Recommendation 3: None required – Recommendations are for noting with any comments.
- Recommendations 5, 7: To be determined by a majority of those Members in attendance, or their substitutes (one vote representing each Authority).]

It was unanimously:

**Resolved:**

- (1) To approve a 2024/25 contribution of £110k per each West of England Unitary Authorities, (to be reviewed for 2025/26 onwards);
- (2) To approve the (LEP) Revenue and Capital Budget for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 1 and 2;
- (3) To note the LEP Revenue and Capital Forecast for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 3 and Appendix 4;
- (4) To approve a £66k drawdown from the LEP General Reserve to fund the shortfall in the 2023/24 LEP Capacity Core Grant;
- (5) To approve the change requests for schemes in the Economic Development Fund programme as set out in Appendix 5;

- (6) To delegate authority for grant giving for the Careers Hub RONI Data project to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Strategic Director of Economy and Skills, in consultation with the Directors of Economy and Skills of the relevant Unitary Authorities. In the event of a consensus not being reached at Director level, decision making will be escalated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in consultation with the Unitary Authority CEOs.
- (7) To approve the award of £49.531m of previously allocated funding from the Economic Development Fund for MetroWest Phase 1 (Portishead Line) subject to the Department for Transport approving the project Full Business Case, addressing any remaining project capital funding shortfall and formally committing (in writing) to taking on any future capital cost risk on the project, as set out in section 20 of this report.
- (8) To delegate the approval of grant giving for the Create Growth programme to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Strategic Director of Economy and Skills in consultation with Unitary Authority Economy and Skills Directors. In the event of a consensus not being reached at Director level, decision making will be escalated to the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in consultation with the Unitary Authority CEOs;

The meeting closed at 5:15pm.

**Signed:**

**Date:**