

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Agenda



Date: Friday, 24 April 2020

Time: 11.30 am

Venue: Remote Access

Distribution:

Councillors: Geoff Gollop (Chair), Celia Phipps (Vice-Chair), Stephen Clarke, Claire Hiscott, Paula O'Rourke, Jo Sergeant, Brenda Massey, Anthony Negus, Jeff Lovell, Mark Brain and Lucy Whittle

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Date: Monday, 20th April 2020



Agenda

- 10. Minutes from the WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee -
For information (standing item)**

(Pages 3 - 21)



West of England Combined Authority WECA Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 2 October 2019, 10:30am
Council Chamber, Bath Guildhall, High Street, Bath BA1 5AW

Present:

Cllr Stephen Clarke (Chair)	Cllr Gary Hopkins, Bristol City Council
Cllr Brian Allinson, South Gloucestershire Council	Cllr Carole Johnson, Bristol City Council
Cllr James Arrowsmith, South Gloucestershire Council	Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Winston Duguid, Bath and North East Somerset Council	Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council
Cllr Geoff Gollop, Bristol City Council	

Officers In Attendance:

Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal & Democratic Services	Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services
Ian Hird, Scrutiny Manager	Stephen Bashford, Head of Business and Skills
Sue Dobson, Future Bright Project Manager	Tim Milgate, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies:

Cllr John Ashe, South Gloucestershire Council	Cllr Mhairi Threlfall, Bristol City Council
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Minutes

1	<p>WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and those present introduced themselves.</p>
2	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Ashe and Cllr Mhairi Threlfall.</p>
3	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011</p> <p>Cllr Stephen Clarke declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 12 of the Joint Committee agenda (discussed under item 11 of this agenda) "Local Enterprise Partnership One Front Door Funding Programme" as The Courts project which was seeking funding was run by the Green Mayoral Candidate.</p>
4	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the minutes being amended to show that Cllr Stephen Clarke was Chair of the Committee.</p>
5	<p>ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS; PETITIONS; STATEMENTS)</p> <p>Two questions had been received from Christina Biggs and the replies had been circulated.</p> <p>A statement had been received from Christina Biggs and this was verbally submitted at the meeting.</p>

	<p>In respect of the points raised, the Committee asked that the JSP be discussed at their next formal meeting in December 2019, with an initial discussion to be held at the next informal meeting.</p> <p>The WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee reiterated their wish that a supplementary question should be allowed at meetings (this point would again be included as part of the Chair's comments to be presented at the 4 October 2019 WECA Committee meeting).</p>
6	<p>CHAIR'S BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>At the invitation of the Chair, the Vice-Chair raised the issue that each of the 11 members of the Scrutiny Committee could focus on a specialist topic in order to scrutinise the work of the WECA Boards more effectively by, say having three members look at the work of each (the four Boards were Planning and Housing, Transport, Skills and Business) and feeding in views before each meeting. It was noted that this would be purely a voluntary arrangement due to existing time pressures on Councillors. It was noted however, that the Board papers were not currently public, but the minutes of the items discussing upcoming items for the WECA Committee and Joint Committee were published.</p> <p>It was decided to discuss the idea further at the next informal meeting.</p>
7	<p>2018/19 CITY REGION DEAL PERFORMANCE</p> <p>Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services, submitted a report providing a summary of the West of England's City Region Deal's pooled Business Rates performance for 2018/19, in accordance with the requirements of the Business Rates Pooling Principles Agreement. There was an accompanying presentation made at the meeting.</p> <p>It was stated that the West of England City Deal included a commitment that the region would keep 100% of business rates growth in five local enterprise areas (LEAs) over a 25 year period. Those five local enterprise areas had now become seven areas. The Business Rates Pooling Board managed the pool, worth approximately £500m over 25 years. It was anticipated that the revenue would be £22.7m for the region in 2019/20, slightly ahead of target. There had been particularly strong growth in the South Gloucestershire LEAs. It was noted that the pool remained vulnerable to changes in government legislation, business rate revaluations and successful appeals (all of which are not within our control).</p> <p>The growth performance and balances held were set out in Appendix A. The latest EDF programme was set out in Appendix B.</p> <p>The 100% Business Rate Retention pilot had been running since 2017 and was worth £14.7m per annum. A new national scheme would be rolled out from April 2021 but it was not known how this would impact, if at all, on the existing WoE City Deal.</p> <p>The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was asked whether as the Port expanded its activity, how that may impact North Somerset and Bristol. In response it was noted that it was seen as a separate entity but would be regarded as being in the area with most economic activity; • Scrutiny of spend lay with the local authorities when allocated to projects; • The Local Growth Fund would end in March 2021 and may be replaced by the Shared Prosperity Fund; • Rebalancing rates or property values changing would impact on the growth figures.

	<p>Agreed:</p> <p>(1) That the 2018/19 Business Rates Pool growth performance and the balances held at 31 March 2019 be noted;</p> <p>(2) That the progress against the latest EDF programme be noted.</p>
8	<p>EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS PLAN IMPLEMENTATION</p> <p>Stephen Bashford, Head of Business and Skills, provided an update on implementation of the West of England Employment and Skills Plan.</p> <p>The Employment & Skills Plan contained 11 initial actions that have been agreed for the region alongside a set of outcomes that we will be tracking to ensure the plan is contributing to achieving our regional ambition to drive clean and inclusive growth. This paper provided an initial update on progress against the 11 actions in the plan. Plans in relation to the actions that have not yet started would be developed over the coming months. To provide oversight for the delivery of the Plan, a Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) is being established, ensuring expert oversight was in place to continue building the understanding of the current and future labour market. An endorsement of the SAP had been given by the LEP Board meeting. The SAP would be established over the next few weeks.</p> <p>The following comments were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question was raised whether the European Funding would be affected and how any short term shortages of workers in specific fields may be plugged? In response it was noted that the European Funding had been secured and that the programmes would be designed to meet short term pressures; • Some of the key milestones were missing dates. In response it was stated that the plan covered a number of years and it was not possible for everything to be delivered at once. • It was noted that some of the baseline figures used were out of date such as for vulnerable people or BME. Stephen Bashford replied that some of the figures (eg for GVA) had a two year lag but that the latest figures were used. However, in terms of success the interventions may not necessarily be reflected in the statistics but the direction of travel should be apparent; • When the schemes started reporting average performance etc could be given but no targets had been given as the aspiration was about closing gaps, exceeding expectations, etc.; • The aspirations did not list how these things were going to be achieved such as reducing hard to fill vacancies. In response it was noted that all the targets would be contributing to the high level metrics. <p>Agreed:</p> <p>That the update report be noted.</p>
9	<p>FUTURE BRIGHT PROJECT UPDATE</p> <p>Sue Dobson, Future Bright Project Manager, submitted a report updating the committee on the progress of the Future Bright project and the proposal to progress the project beyond the pilot stage as “Future Bright plus”. An accompanying presentation was given at the meeting.</p> <p>DWP funding for the Future Bright pilot was due to end in March 2020, and with no</p>

	<p>confirmation of further funds from DWP, there is a risk the delivery architecture will fall away. The continuation of Future Bright was recognised as a priority within the Employment and Skills Plan and on this basis a Full Business Case had been submitted by WECA seeking £3.6m from the Investment Fund, which would be drawn from the £30m allocation for business and skills and enable a seamless transition when DWP funding ended. This would build on the lessons learned from the pilot phase. As part of the Investment Fund report submitted to its 4 October 2019 meeting, the WECA Committee would consider a recommendation seeking approval for the Full Business Case for Future Bright Plus.</p> <p>The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A question was asked regarding the figures on zero hours contracts and the numbers of self-employed and whether these numbers were growing. No ‘direction of travel’ figures were available at the meeting. The self-employed figures were people who got their income without having an identified employer; • In regard to the mental health figures it was queried as to where the ‘as high as 50%’ figure came from. It was reported from officers’ own experiences and the information reported back from delivery participants. It was also a scheme that helped people with low incomes, helping to boost their morale; • Officers continued to look at other sources of funding, such as charities and specific support for individuals. The DWP had not made any commitment on existing funding from March 2020; <p>Agreed: That the report be noted and that the WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee place on record its support for the continuation of the project; and these comments to be forwarded to the 4 October 2019 WECA Committee as part of the Chair’s report.</p>
10	<p>INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE - DELIVERY OF WECA INVESTMENT PROGRAMME / STRATEGIC PROJECTS & ESTABLISHMENT OF PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT OFFICE</p> <p>Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services, introduced a report updating the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the delivery of the WECA investment programme, and the establishment of a Programme Management Office (PMO).</p> <p>The report stated that the PMO would define and standardise the approach to Project Management, disseminating Project Management Best Practice, and this would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establishing and refining Project Management Tools and Processes; ○ Managing the project performance reporting process; ○ Mentoring and supporting Project Managers delivering the WECA programme; ○ Managing an integrated programme to ensure the organisation managed and mitigated interface risk, and maximise the cost and programme opportunities for integrating where possible; ○ Managing resource availability including through provision of Project Managers to support project delivery, and managing the pipeline of work to be let via the PSF. <p>The Overview & Scrutiny Committee was asked to note activity to date, and further updates would be brought to the meeting as plans progressed.</p> <p>Agreed: That the update be noted, and further updates be brought forward as necessary.</p>
11	<p>REVIEW OF 4 OCTOBER 2019 WECA COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE REPORTS</p>

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed the agenda papers to be considered at the meetings of WECA Committee and Joint Committee on 4 October 2019. Specific comments would be circulated to the Committees for their consideration as part of their decision-making processes.

The following comments were noted:

- In relation to the Investment Fund report, the feasibility studies and Outline Business Cases would be made public for any schemes as part of the usual decision making process and evidence trail;
- While only 9 bids had been received for the Professional Services Framework (PSF) Procurement those businesses that had bid were all reputable with experience in this field. It was confirmed that legal services was not part of the framework;
- Once the PSF is established Social Value will be linked to the National Themes Outcomes and Measures Framework (TOMs);
- PSF - It was requested that the word "local" be added before SMEs;
- It was confirmed that the Independent Remuneration Panel would reconvene before Christmas 2019 and, as part of their further review, will consider the remuneration for the Chairs of WECA Audit Committee and WECA Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Cllr Duguid stated that he believed that the level of the Mayor's allowance was set too low to attract high quality candidates;
- The Scrutiny Committee requested that Patricia Greer be invited to attend the next formal meeting in her role as the Chief Executive of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the purpose of raising awareness of the LEP activities. Cllr Gollop was asked to pre-prepare the scope of what the Committee would want to scrutinise as part of this item;
- It was questioned whether the Business Plan/Corporate Risk Register needed to be updated in light of the Inspectors' feedback on the JSP;

Agreed: That the comments of the WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the reports to be considered at the 4 October 2019 meetings of WECA Committee and Joint Committee be submitted to those meetings for their consideration during the decision-making process.

Wednesday, 4 December 2019, 10.30 am, City Hall, Bristol City Council

The meeting closed at 12:17pm.

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

Wednesday, 29 January 2020, 10:30 am
Council Chamber, Bath Guildhall

Present:

Cllr Stephen Clarke, Bristol City Council (Chair)
Cllr Brian Allinson, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr James Arrowsmith, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Winston Duguid, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Geoff Gollop, Bristol City Council
Cllr Gary Hopkins, Bristol City Council
Cllr Carole Johnson, Bristol City Council
Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council
Cllr Mhairi Threlfall, Bristol City Council

In Attendance from North Somerset Council

Cllr Mike Bird
Cllr Huw James

Officers in attendance:

Patricia Greer, Chief Executive
Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Ian Hird, Scrutiny Manager
Helen Edelstyn, Senior Policy Manager
Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services
Stephen Bashford, Head of Business and Skills
George Margesson, Principal Economist

Minutes

1	WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.
2	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE No apologies had been received from members of the Committee but Cllr Nigel Ashton, North Somerset Council, had sent apologies.
3	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011 There were no declarations of interest declared.
4	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
5	ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS; PETITIONS; STATEMENTS) Three public statements had been received and these had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting. Mr David Redgewell and Cllr Sarah Warren (Bath and North East Somerset Council) attended the meeting and addressed the Committee on the topic of their statements.

6	<p>CHAIR'S BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The following items were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the public statements, the Chair explained that members had agreed to participate in a number of informal “sub-groups” formed from the existing members of the Committee on different topics of interest and mirroring the existing WECA Boards. An initial meeting to discuss transport issues had been arranged and would look in detail at the JLTP4. • The Committee also called for a Climate Emergency Board to be established so that Cabinet members with that portfolio could feed directly into WECA’s decision-making process. Patricia Greer in response stated that consideration had taken place about whether any additional governance process should be established and that it was important that the climate emergency was embedded in the culture and decision making of the organisation, including Scrutiny. A formal discussion of these issues would take place at the meeting of WECA Committee on 31 January 2020.
7	<p>CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLANNING UPDATE</p> <p>Helen Edelstyn, Senior Policy Manager and George Margesson, Principal Economist, introduced a report together with an accompanying presentation on the climate emergency planning update.</p> <p>The report stated that in July 2019, the WECA Committee had declared a climate emergency, which committed the West of England to carbon neutrality by 2030. As part of the emergency declaration, a report back to Committee was required every six months on progress. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee was asked to note and comment on the update report on climate emergency planning in advance of the 31 January 2020 joint meeting of the WECA Committee and the West of England Joint Committee.</p> <p>The report included the following key information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An update on the collaborative work that had taken place following the Combined Authority’s declaration of a climate emergency; • A high-level review of regional climate emergency evidence; • Details of action already taken to address the climate emergency; • Details of next steps, including the development, in liaison with West of England unitary authorities, of a Climate Emergency Action Plan; • Details of steps being taken to embed action on climate emergency. <p>The Action Plan would be drawn up in collaboration with the West of England unitary authorities and be available in Spring 2020.</p> <p>The following comments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diesel engine trains stop at Temple Meads and keep their engines running which is leading to further pollution. Responsibility for this lay with Network Rail and Rail operators, however, WECA was actively working with rail partners to support efforts to decarbonise. • It was difficult to find evidence to reflect the emergency prioritised in the budget as, for instance, £813k was being invested in a study for a new by-pass while £165k was identified for strategic Park and Rides. The various budgets needed to reflect the emergency situation. Immediate action was needed to ensure the climate emergency

	<p>was appropriately reflected in budget profiles;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were some frustrations over the pace of decision making when significant investment was needed. Some members felt that the action points set out were not immediate enough; • Hydrogen use was not mentioned in the report; • The Committee recommended that a Climate Board be established; • There was a request for the Mayor of the West of England to attend a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee to answer questions particularly on this issue. It was noted however, that this may mean all the members of the WECA should be invited; • It was pointed out that rail and flight emissions were counted nationally and internationally and therefore excluded from regional emissions data; • £250k had been allocated, for early business case development, whereas Bristol had allocated £3m as an emergency measure; • There was a request for use of the phrasing Scope 1, 2 and 3 in relation to emissions. In response, it was stated that the report had deliberately been written in 'plain English' to assist people who may not be familiar with the topic; • The activity of the organisation as a whole was reflected in the budget such as the money and capital being put into the walking and cycling strategy. The action plans in development would develop emergency actions further. Climate change actions were embedded in every report produced by the Authority. Regular meetings took place with the officers from the constituent authorities. However, different authorities were at different stages. • The governance arrangements had been considered by political leaders and changes to those arrangements were a matter for the political leaders to agree at their committee meeting on 31 January 2020. • There were plans for WECA to upgrade its website; • The Authority was also working with M4 corridor partners to develop a 'hydrogen corridor demonstrator' for freight and heavy goods; • All four of the Authority's Boards had been given chance to comment on the Climate Emergency report and those comments would be shared with WECA Committee as part of its decision-making process; • The Committee recommended that the pre-existing budget schemes be reviewed in context of the climate emergency; • The Committee also felt that delays in setting up some of the projects had led to some opportunities missed, with projects taking three years or more in the planning stage; • The Committee called upon WECA to become a designated low carbon champion organisation by embedding this within its culture. <p>AGREED: That the report be noted and the Committee place on record its comments to the WECA Committee together with its view that £250k of resource was inadequate to tackle this issue (see appendix 1).</p> <p>(Cllrs Mike Bird and Huw James left the meeting after this item).</p>
8	<p>REVIEW OF 31 JANUARY 2020 WECA COMMITTEE AND JOINT COMMITTEE REPORTS, INCLUDING THE 2020/21 BUDGET REPORTS</p> <p>Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services, introduced a report with an accompanying presentation that provided a summary of the various budget and finance reports that would be considered by WECA Committee at its meeting on 31 January 2020.</p> <p>The following comments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WECA had been created for long-term investment in the region but had to demonstrate additionality;

- WECA had limited scope to raise any funds itself. Often the funding pots available were short-term or time limited. For instance the business rates retention pilot would end in 2021 and it was unclear at this stage what fund would replace this;
- The IBB review had been carried out and funding had been secured for another five years;
- Each scheme funded by the Investment Fund was set out in the papers;
- The government did not provide all the necessary funds in one go but in chunks and each tranche of funding was subject to “gateway reviews”, taking place approximately every five years;
- In relation to the “One Front Door” funding report, concerns were raised from north Bristol scrutiny councillors that appropriate consultation had not taken place with local residents or councillors on the proposed segregated bi-directional cycle path from Crow Lane roundabout to the Charlton Road junction included as part of the A4018 corridor improvements and asked that appropriate consultations take place in future;
- The Authority was looking at regional infrastructure planning for the region while the JSP was on hold;
- The slides seemed to indicate the prioritisation of Yate Park and Ride over strategic sites and it was asked whether WECA could intervene by front-loading. It was noted that some schemes required additional funding, or were funded from different funding streams;
- Mass Transit was WECA commissioned and led, but different arrangements were in place for Metrobus;
- Mass Transit did however have different meanings to different groups in society. Future priorities were set out in JLTP4;
- Western Gateway was launched a couple of months ago and was being worked through. It would form part of the pan-regional working;
- Around £20m was left as contingency fund, together with an extra £30m for the Business and Skills element of the Local Industrial Strategy;

Agreed: That the finance update be noted and the Committee place on record its comments to the WECA Committee (see Appendix 1)

It was agreed that the Chair would present the Overview & Scrutiny Committee’s comments to the Joint meeting of the WECA Committee and Joint Committee at its meeting on 31 January 2020, and these comments are set out below (see Appendix 1)

The meeting closed at 12:39pm

APPENDIX 1

COMMENTS FROM COUNCILLOR STEPHEN CLARKE, CHAIR OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS SUBMITTED TO: JOINT MEETING OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE – 31 JANUARY 2020

Arising from our meeting held on 29 January 2020, I wish to raise the following matters on behalf of the Combined Authority’s Overview & Scrutiny Committee:

1. Climate emergency planning update (agenda item 15)

Overall, we are very disappointed with the report and have great difficulty in accepting the adequacy of the report as a progress update. Our concerns are summarised below.

Immediacy of action:

The key point about the Climate Emergency is that it is an *emergency*; an emergency is defined as a serious/unexpected and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action. In our view, the action taken to date, as set out in the report, does not indicate that the authority is taking forward action on the Climate Emergency with the required pace and urgency.

Climate Emergency action plan:

We note from the report that the “next steps” include the development, in liaison with the West of England unitary authorities, of a Climate Emergency action plan. It was suggested at the meeting that this would be available in the Spring. We would like a clear date to be set by which the action plan will be available to scrutinise.

Governance:

The report recommends that a requirement be added to the terms of reference of all the authority’s governance boards to consider the impact of all decisions and advice on the climate emergency. Whilst we understand that the rationale behind this proposal is to embed tackling the climate emergency into the authority’s governance, **we recommend in the strongest possible terms that a new Climate Emergency Board is established** to drive forward the regional response, and to ensure that effective actions / priorities are taken forward as quickly as possible. Our view is that the Cabinet lead portfolio member in each of the authorities should comprise this Board, and that the Board should also maintain strong links with the climate emergency action being taken in each authority. Scrutiny of course has an important role in monitoring progress and holding the authority to account but is not empowered to take the decisions required moving forwards to ensure that the essential urgent action is being maintained and that the appropriate level of resource is allocated.

We additionally recommend that WECA should take on an additional employee to concentrate/ focus / champion / co-ordinate activity as Bristol City Council have done.

Resource priorities:

We believe that the £250k currently allocated to support regional climate emergency action is inadequate and should be increased. We are aware that the authority’s £350m investment programme was set before the authority declared a climate emergency in July 2019. Nevertheless, we feel it is essential to maintain an ongoing challenge to ensure that investment priorities are re-assessed in light of the Climate Emergency declaration. For example, investment in strategic park and ride sites should be brought forward at the earliest opportunity. We believe that WECA should revisit the prioritisation of the major schemes list that was decided before the declaration of the Climate Emergency and re-assess them in the light of the emergency.

We invite Mayor Tim Bowles to attend one of our meetings and discuss this issue as soon as possible.

2. Consultation with ward councillors and residents

In connection with the Joint Committee report on the LEP One Front Door funding programme, we noted strong concerns from north Bristol scrutiny councillors that appropriate consultation had not taken place with local residents or councillors on the proposed segregated bi-directional cycle path from Crow Lane roundabout to the Charlton Road junction included as part of the A4018 corridor improvements. Whilst we are aware this is a Bristol scheme, we nevertheless feel that the Combined Authority must build appropriate checks and balances into their processes to ensure that

all proposals brought through for WECA funding have been the subject of all appropriate consultation.

3. Status of the Joint Spatial Plan

We note that the Joint Spatial Plan is paused given that two authorities have withdrawn from the process. We request please that scrutiny is kept fully informed about the next steps for regional strategic planning.

4. Investment Fund gateway review

We noted from the budget update that the first 5 year Investment Fund gateway review/evaluation is starting. We feel that in overall terms, the authority is strongly placed in terms of meeting the review's requirements.

Cllr. Stephen Clarke
Chair, West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda item 9

**Comments from Chair of the
Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

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COMMENTS FROM COUNCILLOR STEPHEN CLARKE, CHAIR OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMMENTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO: JOINT MEETING OF WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY COMMITTEE AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2020

The meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 March was inquorate because of Coronavirus. Notwithstanding this the members who were present on 18 March met informally to review the agenda papers to be considered at the 20 March joint meeting of the Combined Authority Committee and Joint Committee.

Having considered the papers for the 20th March meeting we wish to raise the following matters:

1. Holding a WECA / Joint Committee meeting on 20 March

Given all the circumstances around the Coronavirus situation, Members were somewhat surprised that the 20 March meeting is going ahead.

2. Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP) (agenda item 13)

Members have established a transport sub-group which met to review the JLTP. The sub-group produced the detailed statement attached as **Appendix 1**. Members (present on 18 March and through subsequent email correspondence) have agreed to endorse this statement for submission to the West of England Joint Committee and commend the recommendations contained therein.

In addition, arising from the discussion on 18 March, we would like to raise the following points about the JLTP raised by members at the meeting on 18th March:

a. The introductory preamble “setting the scene” section at the start of the document refers to a range of broad principles many of which are concerned with recognising the significance of climate change and reaffirming the declaration of the Climate Emergency made by WECA in 2019. However, while there are many sections of the detail of the plan which we applaud, these principles are sometimes not reflected fully in the subsequent detailed sections of the plan, in particular the numerous major road building schemes that are proposed.

b. In view of this, we would like to see as much transparency and clarity as possible about how the future development of JLTP5 will be taken forward.

c. We were told by officers that there will be a need for schemes and major interventions included in JLTP4 to be kept under review (for example, to take account of government infrastructure announcements/plans) and we would like clear information to be made available about this review process for JLTP4.

d. We would also like clear and transparent information to be provided about the process to be followed in prioritising and taking forward major schemes and interventions included in JLTP4, and an assurance that this scrutiny committee will be kept informed

and engaged in commenting on schemes as they are developed. We consider that it is also critical to have clarity about how the evaluation of major schemes in terms of climate change impact is assessed and how the current proposed set of schemes is re-prioritised following the declaration of a Climate Emergency.

3. Climate emergency action plan

Further to the comments submitted to our last meeting on the issue, we note that the WECA Climate Emergency action plan is due to be brought forward for committee approval in June. We again stress the critical importance of clear priority actions being taken forward at the regional level and request that scrutiny is given as early sight as possible of the emerging action plan.

Cllr. Stephen Clarke
Chair, West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Appendix 1 - Joint Statement from WECA Scrutiny Members: Meeting of Informal West of England Scrutiny committee: Transport sub-group

Attendees: Hal MacFie (BANES); Gary Hopkins (Bristol City Council); Mhairi Threlfall (Bristol City Council); Huw James (North Somerset); Mike Bird (North Somerset) Brian Allinson (South Gloucestershire)

The West of England/WECA Scrutiny committee, transport sub-group met on the 10th of February 2020 to discuss the JLTP4 in advance of adoption at each of the constituent councils and WECA. This response paper is a result of that discussion

Response paper to the JLTP4

General comments

There is a general consensus amongst scrutiny commission members that the JLTP4 contains broad principles which we support. We also recognise that successful schemes have been implemented historically as a result of cross-boundary working, and support the continued cross-boundary working in order to tackle our current transport challenges. Previous cross-boundary success was based upon a concentration on specific major schemes with clear objectives, clarity and funding, and this needs to be strongly reflected in the JLTP4. It is welcome to see the prominence of climate change, however, scrutiny members express a concern that the document can in parts be contradictory to this ambition.

We would like to reiterate the urgent need to respond to the climate emergency, and to prioritise the delivery of schemes which enable efficient and sustainable movements around the West of England.

Despite the length of the JLTP4 document, scrutiny members do have a number of concerns. We have specific comments on elements of the plan which are summarised at the end of our response document. We also have a few general comments about the plan and the process of engagement, communication and consultation on the document itself, which are detailed below.

Firstly, there has been mixed messages given to members from the constituent authorities regarding the lifetime of the JLTP4. As far as members from Bristol, BANES and South Gloucestershire were concerned (and we assume, the same understanding as the general public) the adoption of this document sets out the vision, mission, objectives, major schemes and key principles for transport delivery within the West of England over the next 10-15 years. However, from North Somerset members' perspectives, the JLTP4 document for approval on the 18th of February, is an interim stop-gap.

We recognise as a committee that there is a rationale that the JLTP4 will be a stop-gap whilst constituent authorities confirm their emerging local plans. However, this has not been clearly communicated. It could take another 2-3 years to develop a JLTP5, and given the growth of the region over the next few years and the climate emergency, it was felt that this was not enough. The JLTP4 needs to be robust enough for local authorities to sign up to a detailed set of key principles and key schemes, but without over-reaching. The committee appreciate that this is a difficult

balance, but felt that the JLTP4 did not come close to reflecting this balance as it currently stands.

We would like to request clarity on the purpose and lifetime of this document and recommend that WECA (and the constituent authorities) clearly relay this to the general public.

Secondly, although the committee supports the broad principles, it needs to be highlighted that these are currently being contradicted by current decisions being made by the constituent councils. It was not clear once these principles are adopted, if this will change, where the accountability sits and who would ensure future decisions around transport will take into account these principles. For instance, if a constituent authority chooses to review or remove a strategic bus lane, what weight does the JLTP4 or WECA (or indeed WECA scrutiny) have to call this in?

We recommend that clarity is given in terms of decision-making, to ensure members and the general public have a clear and transparent understanding of WECA's transport functions and the responsibilities sitting within the constituent authorities.

Currently, the information provided by WECA officers, and the constituent authority officers is confusing, can conflict, and decision-making is often buried within paperwork.

We would like clarity on the chain of command, who is doing what and how this plan will be implemented and success measured. There is a danger without any prioritisation, timescales and better confidence of cash to deliver, we finish up with a wish list. Therefore, we would like clarity on the major schemes, and how these are being prioritised (especially in the context of a climate emergency and emerging local plans). This plan should also detail how WECA strategically looks to fund and enable the delivery of these schemes.

We would like to request clarification on the role of scrutiny in shaping future policy, and suggest that with the future changes to the WECA transport function and the climate emergency, that the transport sub-committee is formally constituted.

It is recognised that our region's transport networks have been chronically underfunded. It is recognised that a short time in the recent past with effective cooperation in the sub region got more than a share of the national pot. We would like to see this to continue, and this ambition transparent and reflected in the JLTP4.

The scrutiny commission sub-committee recommends:

That given the increase of WECA's transport functions, including the transference of staff, that a constituted transport scrutiny sub-committee is formed with clear terms of reference that can work with and support the executive function

A responsibility and decision tree is published and accessible to all members and members of the public

A prioritised major schemes list is published, with a delivery timeline and a specific assessment criteria to ensure all schemes are contributing to our commitment to reduce carbon emissions.

Specific comments

The committee also have a number of comments on each of the sections of the JLTP4

Connectivity beyond the West of England

- Given the delivery of multiple Clean Air Zones, WECA should be leading on support for businesses and members of the public, including a West of England wide scrappage or loan scheme and working cross-authority to leverage buying power for Council vehicles (e.g EV) and EV taxi's.
- WECA should be taking the lead on connectivity with businesses. There is little that focuses on towns and village connectivity, and recognises our predominant industries and how a transport plan will enable them to succeed.
- The introduction of CAZ and traffic restrictions will require new access points that will have to be funded centrally, and we ask WECA to lobby for additional implementation funding.
- There needs to be a stronger focus on East and South connectivity, and the impact of the rural elements of the region on our transport needs.
- We need to consider how different modes integrate and this is not specifically laid out within the plan. WECA should be acting as a bridge between local authorities to ensure schemes are integrated and respond to need.

Connectivity within the West of England

- We agree with the need for Mass transit – expanding Metrobus, investing in our local rail networks, protecting existing routes and considering tram options
- We would like to highlight the importance of park and rides (e.g. M32 park and ride) and the importance of accelerating delivery with key stakeholders.
- There is still an over emphasis on routes that go into city centres. Rural residents will need more orbital routes such as the proposed corridor to the South East of Bristol.
- We support increasing the use of new technology but also express concern about supporting the expansion of smart motorways (page 65) given the recent safety issues raised
- We recommend clarity on shared maintenance priorities, and question why the Key Route Network also does not explicitly take into account public transport, cycle and walking movements, including the maintenance of footways and cycle paths as well as roads

Local connectivity

- This section is detailed, but does not distinguish where the responsibility lies, or who would be responsible for measuring progress against these goals.
- Specific policies are mentioned which have not yet been formally adopted by the constituent authorities

- There is a concern about the presumptions of schemes that do not reflect the major scheme ambitions, nor the emerging local plans
- There is lack of consideration for cross-boundary working on the management of traffic signals and congestion. We would expect this to be a key part of the local connectivity proposals.
- We support the focus on park and rides, and these should be prioritised for delivery but we should also be ensuring that every bus stop and car club car has a Sheffield stand next to it for bike and ride. We also support mini-hop and rides in strategic locations. If park and rides (and link and rides) can be linked to existing bus services this will limit additional Co2 emissions.

Neighbourhood connectivity

- The committee welcomes the concept of Neighbourhood plans but there is little clarity on who will deliver these plans, how they will interact with local and strategic plans, and how they might have meaningful influence - especially for cross-authority communities (e.g. Cheswick Village).
- We welcome speed reduction, but query the involvement of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary within this recommendation and where the additional resource for police enforcement will come from.

Further Submissions

- We will be making further detailed submissions on future consultations (e.g. Bus Strategy) in the near future.