

Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission Agenda



Date: Wednesday, 6 January 2021

Time: 3.00 pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting - Zoom Committee Meeting
with Public Access via YouTube

Distribution:

Councillors: Paula O'Rourke (Chair), Fabian Breckels (Vice-Chair), Mark Bradshaw, Tom Brook, Martin Fodor, Carole Johnson, Kevin Quartley, Mark Weston, Mark Wright and Tim Rippington

Issued by: Dan Berlin, Scrutiny Advisor

City Hall, PO Box 3399, Bristol, BS3 9FS

Tel: 0117 3525232

E-mail: democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk

Date: Wednesday, 23 December 2020



Agenda

1. Welcome, Introductions and Safety Information

(Pages 4 - 5)

2. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

3. Declarations of Interest

To note any declarations of interest from the Councillors. They are asked to indicate the relevant agenda item, the nature of the interest and in particular whether it is a **disclosable pecuniary interest**.

Any declarations of interest made at the meeting which is not on the register of interests should be notified to the Monitoring Officer for inclusion.

4. Public Forum

Up to 30 minutes is allowed for this item.

Any member of the public or Councillor may participate in Public Forum. The detailed arrangements for so doing are set out in the Public Information Sheet at the back of this agenda. Public Forum items should be emailed to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk and please note that the following deadlines will apply in relation to this meeting:-

Questions - Written questions must be received 3 clear working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that your question(s) must be received in this office at the latest by 5pm on **Wednesday 30th December 2020**.

Petitions and Statements - Petitions and statements must be received on the working day prior to the meeting. For this meeting this means that your submission must be received in this office at the latest by 12.00 noon on **Tuesday 5th January 2021**.

Register to Attend - Your intention to attend and speak to your Public Forum submission must be received 2 clear working days prior to the meeting. For this meeting, this means that your registration to attend must be received in this office at the latest by 5pm on **Thursday 31st December**.



5. West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Expansion

(Pages 6 - 43)

- a) What evidence was available to leaders detailing the benefits (i.e. investment, economic etc.) and disadvantages of North Somerset joining WECA (a) for Bristol, and (b) the wider West of England region?
- b) What reassurances did the Mayor receive from Government/WECA regarding any new governance arrangements that would be needed to safeguard Bristol's interests in an expanded Combined Authority?
- c) What are the key challenges regarding WECA's delivery and why should this be a factor when considering the expansion of the combined authority?
- d) Next steps – should North Somerset wish to join the Combined Authority in the future what key factors should the residents of Bristol consider if asked in a public consultation? What would the Mayor seek to be included in any future deal with Government regarding WECA expansion?



Public Information Sheet

Inspection of Papers - Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

You can find papers for all our meetings on our website at <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/council-meetings>

Covid-19: changes to how we hold public meetings

Following changes to government rules, we will use video conferencing to hold all public meetings, including Cabinet, Full Council, regulatory meetings (where planning and licensing decisions are made) and scrutiny.

Councillors will take decisions remotely and the meetings will be broadcast live on YouTube.

Members of the public who wish to present their public forum in person during the video conference must register their interest by giving at least two clear working days' notice to Democratic Services of the request. To take part in the meeting, you will be required to register for a Zoom account, so that Democratic Services is able to match your named Zoom account to your public forum submission, and send you the password protected link and the instructions required to join the Zoom meeting to make your statement or ask your supplementary question(s).

As part of our security arrangements, please note that we will not permit access to the meeting if your Zoom credentials do not match your public forum submission credentials. This is in the interests of helping to ensure a safe meeting environment for all attending or observing proceedings via a live broadcast.

Please note: Members of the public will only be invited into the meeting for the duration of their submission and then be removed to permit the next public forum participant to speak.

Changes to Public Forum

Members of the public may make a written statement, ask a question or present a petition to most meetings. Your statement or question will be sent to the Committee Members and will be published on the Council's website before the meeting. Please send it to democratic.services@bristol.gov.uk. The following requirements apply:

- The statement is received no later than **12.00 noon on the working day before the meeting** and is about a matter which is the responsibility of the committee concerned.
- The question is received no later than **5pm three clear working days before the meeting**.
- Any statement submitted should be no longer than one side of A4 paper. For copyright reasons, we are unable to reproduce or publish newspaper or magazine articles that may be attached to statements.
- **Your intention to attend the meeting must be received no later than two clear working days in advance. The meeting agenda will clearly state the relevant public forum deadlines.**



By participating in public forum business, we will assume that you have consented to your name and the details of your submission being recorded and circulated to the Committee, published on the website and within the minutes. Your statement or question will also be made available to the public via publication on the Council's website and may be provided upon request in response to Freedom of Information Act requests in the future.

We will try to remove personal and identifiable information. However, because of time constraints we cannot guarantee this, and you may therefore wish to consider if your statement contains information that you would prefer not to be in the public domain. Other committee papers may be placed on the council's website and information within them may be searchable on the internet.

During the meeting:

- Public Forum is normally one of the first items on the agenda, although statements and petitions that relate to specific items on the agenda may be taken just before the item concerned.
- There will be no debate on statements or petitions.
- Public Forum will be circulated to the Committee members prior to the meeting and published on the website.
- If you have arranged with Democratic Services to attend the meeting to present your statement or ask a question(s), you should log into Zoom and use the meeting link provided which will admit you to the waiting room.
- The Chair will call each submission in turn and you will be invited into the meeting. When you are invited to speak, please make sure that your presentation focuses on the key issues that you would like Members to consider. This will have the greatest impact.
- Your time allocation may have to be strictly limited if there are a lot of submissions. **This may be as short as one minute, and you may need to be muted if you exceed your allotted time.**
- If there are a large number of submissions on one matter, a representative may be requested to speak on the group's behalf.
- If you do not attend the meeting at which your public forum submission is being taken your statement will be noted by Members.

For further information about procedure rules please refer to our Constitution <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/how-council-decisions-are-made/constitution>

Webcasting/ Recording of meetings

Members of the public attending meetings or taking part in Public forum are advised that all virtual public meetings including Full Council and Cabinet meetings are now broadcast live via the council's [webcasting pages](#). The whole of the meeting will be broadcast (except where there are confidential or exempt items).

Other formats and languages and assistance for those with hearing impairment

You can get committee papers in other formats (e.g. large print, audio tape, braille etc) or in community languages by contacting the Democratic Services Officer. Please give as much notice as possible. We cannot guarantee re-formatting or translation of papers before the date of a particular meeting.

Growth & Regeneration Scrutiny Commission

6th January 2021



Report of: Director Legal and Democratic Services

Title: Legal Briefing – West of England Combined Authority

Ward: ALL

Officer Presenting Report: Director Legal and Democratic Services

Recommendation

That the Commission note the report.

Summary

The briefing note provides an overview of the legal framework that governs the expansion of the West of England Combined Authority.



Briefing Note – West of England Combined Authority

1. This briefing note provides an overview of the legal framework that governs the expansion of the West of England Combined Authority. It has been prepared for the Growth and Regeneration Scrutiny Commission meeting on 6 January 2020.
2. Bristol City Council is a constituent council of the West of England Combined Authority (“WECA”) which was created by the West of England Combined Authority Order 2017 (“the Order”), which was made under Part 6 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (“the 2009 Act”). The other constituent councils are South Gloucestershire Council and Bath and North East Somerset Council.
3. Any decision to expand the Combined Authority would require a change to the WECA Constitution. In practice WECA would need to approve a new governance scheme which would make changes to the WECA Constitution and this would require a unanimous decision of WECA.
4. The authority for this is found in paragraph 4(7)(a) of Schedule 1 of the Order which states that the unanimous approval of the Combined Authority is required for the “approval of the Combined Authority’s constitution and standing orders and any amendments”.
5. Once approved the new governance scheme would need to be the subject of public consultation as required under sections 112 and 113 of the 2009 Act. The requirement for public consultation is a prerequisite to the Secretary of State making an Order under section 106 of the 2009 Act.
6. Section 106 of the 2009 Act makes provision for changes to the boundaries of a combined authority area, by adding (or removing) another local government area, e.g. North Somerset Council.
7. The approval of an Order from the Secretary of State to expand the Combined Authority (made under section 106 of the 2009 Act) would require the consent of WECA, WECA’s Mayor and NSC. As noted above, Putting the order into effect would require the appropriate changes to WECA’s constitution (see para 3), such approval to be unanimous. The separate consent of the other constituent councils would not be required.

Director Legal and Democratic Services
22 December 2020

WECA Expansion timeline of events

Date	Event
30/04/20	Letter: Mayor Rees writes to Mayor Bowles with concerns regarding delivery and management of Investment Fund.
13/07/20	Letter: WECA Mayors and Leaders write to Local Government Minister Simon Clarke to request an exploratory meeting to consider the benefits of expanding the West of England Combined Authority to include North Somerset Council.
16/07/20	Meeting: WECA CEOs, Bristol's CEO Mike Jackson restates Bristol's position that the minister would need to be able to make a clear commitment to significant additional resource and commit to changes to WECA Governance model if we were to want to take WECA expansion any further.
28/07/20	Meeting: WECA Mayors and Leaders meet with Minister Simon Clarke MP. Deputy Mayor Craig Cheney represents Bristol at the meeting. Cllr Cheney makes the following points at the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek a commitment from Government for significant additional resource, if we were to take this any further. • Any offer from Government would need to include a funding commitment for Mass Transit. It would also need to commit to funding the delivery of Temple Quarter masterplan objectives as well as a commitment to secure HIF funding for house building in Hengrove. • As the major city within this combined authority, representing around 2/3rds of the region's economy, Bristol's role is essential to driving the economy, jobs and opportunities for the whole region – and this needs to be reflected in how resources are allocated within the Combined Authority. • Any new settlement must recognise Bristol's status as core city in WECA decision making and shovel ready projects, which have the greatest impact on regional growth and deprivation, should form the basis on how funding is allocated going forward. • We share many of ambitions and goals of regional partners and we will continue to work closely with North Somerset, but without a significant financial offer from Government which would support the delivery of regional projects in Bristol, we won't be able to recommend the proposals to the people of Bristol.
29/07/20	Letter: Mayor Rees writes to Mayor Bowles regarding concerns about the delivery of major capital projects in the region.
03/08/20	Letter: Simon Clarke MP writes to West of England Mayors and leaders regarding WECA expansion – confirming "In parallel with the processes outlined above I will, as I have said, have discussions with my Treasury and other colleagues about your asks for the wider area."
05/08/20	Event: Meeting with MHCLG and Treasury Officials with West of England CEOs to discuss additional investment to enable WECA expansion confirmed by WECA to take place on 24 th August 2020
11/08/20	Letter: West of England Mayors and Leaders write to Minister Simon Clarke MP confirming that "Your promise, to take these opportunities forward with colleagues in HM Treasury to ensure we can agree the very best deal possible, is absolutely vital for us. We need to be able to clearly demonstrate to our populations how this administrative expansion will make a practical difference to their lives. We need certainty on the level of government investment that will be put into these schemes and the benefits they will unlock if we are going to be able to convince our populations of the value of such change."
20/08/20	Event: Meeting between MHCLG & Treasury Officials with West of England CEOs on 24 th August is cancelled.
24/08/20	Letter: from Minister Simon Clarke to West of England Mayors and Leaders stating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be helpful if to have a clearer understanding of the overall level of additional investment you are seeking and further detail of the specific projects you referenced in your letter.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister no longer agrees that the statutory consultation about the proposed order to affect the WECA expansion can only proceed if there is prior agreement on the level of government investment.
25/08/20	Letter: Mayor Rees writes to Mayor Bowles regarding key regional projects that require new or additional funding from the Investment Fund.
27/08/20	Letter: Mayor Bowles replies to Mayor Rees regarding the management of investment fund work.
07/09/20	Letter: West of England Mayors and Leaders write to Minister Simon Clarke seeking a meeting with ministers/officials in HM Treasury to discuss the bold ambitions for the region and to understand the scale of the Government's appetite for further investment. The letter restates the need an understanding of the scope of the deal before we engage the public in a consultation.
08/09/20	Event: MP Simon Clarke resigns from government for personal reasons. Luke Hall MP appointed as new Local Government Minister.
30/09/20	Event: Government confirms that Plans for further English devolution are to be shelved until further notice.
05/10/20	Letter: Mayor Rees writes to Mayor Bowles regarding concerns about the management of WECA Investment fund and lack of deliver of major projects. The letter includes concerns that expanding the boundary of WECA to accommodate North Somerset would only compound WECA's inability to have the needs of the city and its economic opportunity properly reflected in strategy and resource allocations.
14/10/20	Letter: New Local Government Minister, Luke Hall, writes to the West of England Mayors and Leaders regarding WECA expansion. The Minister urges West of England Leaders to proceed to consultation. The Minister states that if there is to be any possibility of making the legislation in time we must receive this summary of responses by Friday 27 November 2020 to the Secretary of State.
15/10/20	email: Mayor Rees write to West of England Mayors and Leaders expressing concern regarding the Minister's letter which does not acknowledged the request we sent in September for a meeting with MHCLG and Treasury Officials to discuss the additional investment that WECA expansion would bring from Government.
04/11/20	Meeting: West of England Mayors and Leaders meet to discuss WECA expansion. Mayor Rees reiterates Bristol's concerns regarding the Government's approach.
05/11/20	Email: Mayor Rees writes to West of England Mayor and Leaders outlining some of the concerns he has raised over the last two years regarding WECA expansion.
06/11/20	Meeting: West of England Mayors, Leaders and CEOs meet to discuss WECA expansion. Mayor Marvin Rees reconfirmed his position that he was unable to agree to a consultation until Government provided certainty prior to consultation on the level of government investment that will be put into key regional schemes and the benefits that will be unlocked. Mayor of Bristol states concern that Government could not even commit to the minimum uplift required in WECA funding to maintain the current rate of investment per head of the population to reflect North Somerset.
06/11/20	Letter: WECA Mayor and Leaders of South Glos, BANES, North Somerset confirming that there is not consensus to proceed to consultation.
10/11/20	Letter: Mayor Bowles writes to Mayor Rees regarding WECA expansion, the management of WECA Investment Fund.
11/11/20	Email: Mayor Rees writes to Minister Luke Hall regarding offering a meeting to discuss WECA expansion.

Ben Mosley

From: Mayor
Sent: 09 November 2020 12:53
To: Ben Mosley
Subject: FW: Confidential: Letter from Mayor Marvin Rees 30.04.2020



From: Mayor <mayor@bristol.gov.uk>
Sent: 30 April 2020 08:49
To: Mayor <mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk>
Subject: Confidential: Letter from Mayor Marvin Rees 30.04.2020

Dear Tim

I am as keen as you are to ensure the partnership we entered into through the Combined Authority structure is a success, and is seen as such. Bristol will not secure the funding it needs for the critical investment in infrastructure, housing and skills that is central to delivering the inclusive and sustainable future we need, if Government and other stakeholders are not confident in the effectiveness of WECA and our joint working.

This is why I feel compelled to write and set out my concerns at how we are working together in the Combined Authority.

We have discussed several times in the past how we should work together. Successful partnership requires many ingredients including a shared vision and understanding of the challenges, the right structures, a strong culture and early evidence of success. We have in the past agreed the need for co-production, recognising the fundamental role of the constituent Councils within WECA. But I do not experience much of this happening in practice. It has felt like we are merely being 'consulted' or informed by a separate entity that doesn't feel we have a part in it.

How we organise for economic recovery following COVID is the latest example – draft Terms of Reference for the Regional Task Force shared with the LEP Board before they have been discussed with us; the press release issued with no input or chance to comment; no opportunity to contribute to your input to M9 discussions with Government and no meaningful cascade of what comes out of them. This pattern is holding us back, at the time when Bristol and the wider region most need us to work together.

I would therefore like us to meet as a matter of urgency, with Patricia and Mike, or just 1-2-1 if you prefer, so we can agree how to ensure maximum impact from our collective effort on economic recovery - through WECA, as well as Western Gateway, Core Cities and other channels.

I will ask my office to arrange for us to meet as soon as possible to move this forward.

Yours



Marvin Rees
Mayor of Bristol

t: + [REDACTED] 0
e: mayor@bristol.gov.uk

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Blog](#)

My [Privacy Notice](#)

Address: Mayor's Office, Bristol City Council, City Hall, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR
Postal address: Mayor's Office, Bristol City Council, PO Box 3399, Bristol BS1 9NE ;

Dedicated | Respect | Ownership | Curious | Collaborative

Simon Clarke MP
Minister for Regional Growth & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Sent via Email: PSSimonClarke@communities.gov.uk

13 July 2020

Dear Simon

Next Steps for West of England Devolution

We are writing to request an exploratory meeting to consider the benefits of expanding the West of England Combined Authority to include North Somerset Council.

We all recognise the value that devolution has brought to our region since the West of England Combined Authority was established in 2017 with additional government funding in excess of £1bn and the powers to ensure local requirements are reflected in delivery of adult education, skills and business support. Together with the ability to programme infrastructure projects over the longer term this has enabled us to plan activities to support the objectives of our Local Industrial Strategy, and to ensure that we continue to work to deliver clean and inclusive economic growth.

We have also continued to build on our successful joint working with North Somerset Council through our Local Enterprise Partnership, with £500m of Economic Development Funding and £200m of Local Growth Funding successfully programmed out across the partnership.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented challenge for the businesses, residents and public services across the West of England. WECA and the LEP have been working to support businesses and residents through this crisis period and have established a regional recovery taskforce to develop plans to ensure that the support and infrastructure needed is in place to support recovery.

Any expansion of the Combined Authority has potential to strengthen our joint arrangements and we are keen to explore opportunities to deliver a more effective recovery for our regional economy, ensuring that the West of England continues to be a dynamic source of growth for the nation.

We look forward to a discussion with you on how an expanded Combined Authority would function, with particular reference to government investment.

.../

Tel: + [REDACTED]
3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EW
Email: mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk
www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) covers Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. WECA also supports the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Joint Committee, which includes North Somerset.

We are all committed to longer-term ambitions to ensure our places, economies and communities survive and then revive and thrive in response to Covid-19 and will contact your private office to arrange a convenient time for a call.

Yours sincerely



Tim Bowles
Mayor
West of England Combined Authority



Marvin Rees
Mayor
Bristol City Council



Donald Davies
Leader
North Somerset Council



Toby Savage
Leader
South Gloucester Council



Dine Romero
Leader
Bath & North East Somerset Council

Tel: +44 (0)117 332 1493

3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EW

Email: mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) covers Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. WECA also supports the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Joint Committee, which includes North Somerset.



Mayor of Bristol

Mayor Tim Bowles
West of England Combined Authority
3 Rivergate,
Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6EW
mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

Reply to Marvin Rees
Telephone 0117 922 2420
E-mail mayor@bristol.gov.uk
Date 29 July 2020

Dear Tim

Funding our Ambition

You will recall we recently discussed the recent DfT bid and need for more ambition in the pace of Investment Fund spending. I understand that at the start of June this year around £100m had been awarded to projects in the Investment Fund programme (excluding an allocation for WECA-related operating costs), under 30% of the total £350m. There is a significant risk that the overall programme will underspend; this would be a major disappointment given the current national focus on investment in shovel ready projects to drive economic recovery.

Recent efforts to re-profile the Investment Fund resulted in the release of £9.8m headroom back into the programme. Whilst this is welcome we think it understates the real level of slippage across the board. We all need to continue to encourage officers to create realistic forecasts but now is also the time to introduce a more ambitious approach to overall programme delivery.

Our senior officers have expertise in managing capital portfolios and they advise that there is invariably a high degree of slippage in all public sector capital programmes of this nature, through a combination of officer optimism bias and capacity constraints. A further factor is that some of the proposed investments will return funds via repayable grants, meaning we can effectively invest a proportion of the Investment Fund more than once.

We recommend introducing a higher level of over programming into the Investment Fund – potentially 50%. This would be in line with the approach to similar capital programmes and would help to ensure that the Investment Fund is fully invested. We do not think that over programming would need to lead to the cancellation of any schemes; these would be re profiled to spend in future funding periods, creating a pipeline of shovel ready projects for future WECA capital allocations. This approach would obviously need to be agreed with the other Unitary Authorities.

Bristol City Council has a number of critical investments which are not currently in the Investment Fund, are ready to go, deliver significant regional economic benefit but which we cannot fund on our own. These projects are Hengrove Park, The Bottle Yard Studios and Colston Hall. Between them these projects would benefit from a further £25m of Investment Fund capital and all have a very high level of confidence of delivery by 2022. More details of these are attached overleaf. We need to avoid a situation where some or all of these excellent projects cannot proceed due to lack of money when there is capital sitting unspent in the Investment Fund.

BCC needs to make decisions on all of these projects before the next meeting of the WECA Committee in October, hence I am writing to you to request a special meeting of leaders and senior offices this month to discuss the proposal to increase the level of over programming allowed. Other UAs may also have shovel ready projects which are currently unfunded and which could also benefit from the revised approach.

Finally, I know you share my ambition to see real progress in the realisation of our ambitions for Temple Quarter. Since the June meeting of the TQ Strategic Board our teams have worked with Homes England and Network Rail on the development of a Collaboration Agreement and plans for a new Temple Quarter Joint Delivery Team (JDT). I understand that there will shortly be a request for WECA funding support to enable the JDT to be established. A decision is needed on this as soon as possible if we are to make progress in securing the critical government funding for Temple Quarter. With that in mind I suggest that if you and I were to indicate our joint approval of the proposed arrangements we could authorise our teams to mobilise the JDT without waiting until the October WECA and West of England Joint Committees.

I look forward to your response to these suggestions.

Yours sincerely,



Marvin Rees
Mayor of Bristol



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Simon Clarke MP
Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 3440

Email: Simon.Clarke@communities.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/mhclg

03 August 2020

Tim Bowles, Mayor West of England Combined
Authority
Marvin Rees, Mayor Bristol City Council
Donald Davies, Leader North Somerset Council
Toby Savage, Leader South Gloucester Council
Dine Romero, Leader Bath and North East Somerset
Council

Dear Tim, Marvin, Donald, Toby and Dine,

Thank you for a very constructive meeting last week. It was very helpful to hear how the expansion of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) could benefit your area, as well as help tackle the challenges you are facing.

As I explained when we met, the Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper, to be published in the autumn, will set out the Government's plans for expanding devolution across England, building on the success of our directly elected combined authority Mayors. This will involve creating more Mayors and giving both them and the existing Mayors the powers they need to lead economic recovery and deliver long-term growth for their regions.

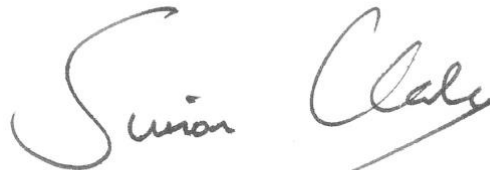
I want to support you to deliver major transport, infrastructure and housing projects in the local area. In the event you determine collectively to progress towards the inclusion of North Somerset within WECA, I will discuss this with my colleagues across government, including those in HM Treasury, to agree the very best deal possible. Expansion of the combined authority area would need commitment from all of us to progress at pace if we are to conclude this ahead of the election in May 2021.

The secondary legislation would need to be in force before 29 March 2021 at the very latest, but I do understand that earlier completion would be desirable to provide confirmation to those organising the elections. Your officers will be familiar with the broad shape of the process, the first part of which must be undertaken locally:

- Between now and the beginning of September, the combined authority will need to prepare the documentation that starts the process – this is the “governance review” which explains why the expansion of the area is a good idea and how the statutory requirements would be met, as well as a “scheme” which sets out the proposed contents of the order. This will form the basis of the consultation that needs to be undertaken before we can proceed with the expansion;
- Once this is ready, the combined authority begins the public consultation which will need to last for an appropriate period – at least 6 weeks;
- Following the consultation, your authorities will want to decide how to proceed, and if you wish to progress with expansion, you need to prepare a summary of the responses for the Secretary of State – which we would need by 9 November;
- We will then formally consider the evidence you provide and, with colleagues across government, consider whether all of the requirements are in place to proceed with the necessary secondary legislation;

- If the decision is to proceed, my officials would aim to share a draft order with you in December which would need to be finalised before formally seeking consent in mid – late January from each constituent local authority, North Somerset, the combined authority and Mayor.

I am very keen to work with you moving forwards to strengthen WECA, which I am confident will benefit the local people and build upon the great work you are already doing there. In parallel with the processes outlined above I will, as I have said, have discussions with my Treasury and other colleagues about your asks for the wider area. In order to progress this expansion within the timetable outlined above, I would seek your collective commitment to delivering this for the benefit of your residents and businesses. As we discussed when we met, it would be very helpful to hear in the next week how you wish to proceed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

SIMON CLARKE MP

Simon Clarke MP
Minister for Regional Growth & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Sent via Email: PSSimonClarke@communities.gov.uk

11 August 2020

Dear Simon

Next steps for West of England devolution

Thank you for meeting with us on 28th July to discuss the opportunities and benefits an expanded West of England Combined Authority could bring to our region.

We were encouraged to hear your support for this initiative and your commitment to help us achieve our ambitions. Your subsequent letter setting out how these proposals align with the government's plans to be included in the Local Recovery and Devolution Whitepaper to be published in the autumn was very helpful.

We all recognise the value that devolution has brought to our region. An expanded Combined Authority could present a real opportunity for our region to more effectively work together to build back better - determinedly driving growth that is more resilient to future shocks and is more inclusive and sustainable thereby reducing the likelihood of future shocks.

During our meeting we highlighted a number of live opportunities to deliver that growth through major transport, infrastructure and housing projects in our region. These are essential to the devolution agenda.

We are all committed to the ambition to ensure our places, economies and communities survive, revive and thrive through Covid-19. We are committed to ensuring we make the strongest contribution possible to the UK's economic recovery.

Your promise, to take these opportunities forward with colleagues in HM Treasury to ensure we can agree the very best deal possible, is absolutely vital for us. We need to be able to clearly demonstrate to our populations how this administrative expansion will make a practical difference to their lives. We need certainty on the level of government investment that will be put into these schemes and the benefits they will unlock if we are going to be able to convince our populations of the value of such change. We would need this certainty before proceeding with the public consultation on the Governance review. To this end, we understand that a meeting is being arranged with Ministers the first week in September. We would need an agreement in principle on the level of government funding by the 3rd September to allow our councils to take the formal decisions required to proceed with the public consultation on the Governance review in line with the timetable set out by your officials.

Tel: [REDACTED]

3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EW

Email: mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) covers Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. WECA also supports the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Joint Committee, which includes North Somerset.

We look forward to working with you and your officials to progress the expansion.

Yours sincerely



Tim Bowles
Mayor of the West of England



Councillor Toby Savage
Leader of South Gloucestershire Council



Marvin Rees
Bristol Mayor



Councillor Dine Romero
Leader of Bath & North East Somerset Council



Councillor Donald Davies
Leader of North Somerset Council

Tel: +44 (0)117 332 1493

3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EW

Email: mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) covers Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. WECA also supports the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Joint Committee, which includes North Somerset.



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Simon Clarke MP
Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 3440
Email: Simon.Clarke@communities.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/mhclg

Tim Bowles, Mayor of the West of England
Councillor Toby Savage, Leader of South
Gloucestershire Council
Marvin Rees, Bristol Mayor
Councillor Dine Romero, Leader of Bath & North East
Somerset Council
Councillor Donald Davies, Leader of North Somerset
Council

24 August 2020

Dear all,

Thank you for your letter of 11 August 2020. As I explained when we met, I am eager to work with you to achieve the expansion of WECA. This would unlock substantial benefits for your region and would be a welcome enhancement of the devolution settlement in such an important part of our country.

Achieving this ahead of the election in May 2021 requires us to work at pace with the full commitment of all partners. The timetable I outlined in my previous letter requires a governance review to be completed by early September, followed by a public consultation, before a formal response is provided to the Secretary of State by 9 November 2020.

I share your ambition to see an expanded Combined Authority able to support ambitious housing, skills and infrastructure projects. However, it would be helpful if we could have a clearer understanding of the overall level of additional investment you are seeking and further detail of the specific projects you referenced in your letter. I do not agree that the statutory consultation about the proposed order to affect the WECA expansion can only proceed if there is prior agreement on the level of government investment. It must be undertaken in parallel with any discussions about investment, with such references to those discussions as you consider appropriate.

I therefore remain keen to work with you to progress expansion and propose the following next steps:

- You proceed with governance review and public consultation in line with timetable outlined in my previous letter
- Your officers and my officials meet in the coming weeks to discuss the specific issues and options ahead
- We meet again in due course once some progress has been made on these points

I should be grateful if you could confirm if you are happy to proceed on this basis. I look forward to continuing to work with you and I'm hopeful that we can agree a way forward that allows us to conclude an expansion in time for the May 2021 elections.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

SIMON CLARKE MP



Mayor of Bristol

Mayor Tim Bowles
West of England Combined Authority
3 Rivergate, Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6EW
mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

Reply to Marvin Rees
Telephone 0117 922 2420
E-mail mayor@bristol.gov.uk
Date 25 August 2020

Dear Tim,

I am writing to follow up on our conversations earlier in the summer, and the more recent discussion that have taken place between our respective officers regarding key regional projects that require new or additional funding from the Investment Fund. I know you share my desire to ensure that we are maximising delivery.

In this regard, your officers have recently let it be known there is a significant amount of head room in the Investment Fund of around £35m and a further £12m in the Local Growth Fund. As you know, Bristol City Council has a number of critical investments that will drive city development are at or close to delivery, but which do not currently have secured funding. These key projects are:

1) **Hengrove development of 1200 homes**

At one stage this was in the programme pipeline, and we are still not clear how it came to be removed. We therefore propose WECA invest £14.8m: £4.8m for highways junctions and associated sustainable travel improvements and £10m to rebuild and expand Perry Court Primary School. Funding needs to be confirmed by September 2020 to keep delivery on track.

2) **Bottleyard Studios**

You are aware that originally this was intended to be the first project in the strategic acquisition fund. We agreed to remove it to facilitate investment elsewhere in the region, on the clear understanding the pot would be topped-up as the first call on any underspend across the programme and this project would then be supported. We propose WECA invest £8m capital to unlock the continued development of the successful Bottle Yard Studios and three studio spaces

on the Hawksfield site: £5.5m for site acquisition costs and £2.5m to develop the new studio spaces. The development of the adjacent Hengrove will take existing studio space temporarily out of commission from Spring 2022 so Hawksfield needs to be open by then to ensure no business disruption. Funding needs to be confirmed by October 2020.

3) Colston Hall

We propose asking the Bristol Music Trust to submit a bid to WECA for a proportion of the additional capital costs required to enable the successful redevelopment of Colston Hall. The venue is an anchor institution for our region's cultural offer and the city centre economy. This requires an investment decision in September 2020 to enable BCC to renegotiate the contractual arrangements and ensure the project can continue with no disruption.

4) Temple Quarter

Since the June meeting of the TQ Strategic Board our teams have worked with Homes England and Network Rail on the development of a Collaboration Agreement and plans for a new Temple Quarter Joint Delivery Team (JDT). Officers from WECA and BCC are working to submit a bid to fund a joint delivery team for the project.

Further projects under discussion with your officers, include the Temple Island Enabling Works and a request for EZ funding for Avonmouth Regeneration posts.

Hengrove, the Bottleyard and Colston Hall could all be secured for the region using Investment Fund capital. All have a very high level of confidence of early delivery. The Temple Quarter Joint Delivery Team will potentially be a combination of EZ and IF investment. These projects will help to significantly 'level up' the regional economy and will help generate much need employment opportunities, which will be key to supporting our economic recovery.

As you will recall I recently wrote to you about the risk that the overall investment programme will underspend. The fact that these projects are at or close to delivery give these projects a urgency. Bristol needs to make decisions on all of these projects before the next meeting of the WECA Committee in October. Ideally I would like to discuss this at our meeting tomorrow, however if that is not possible can I suggest we hold a special meeting of WECA Mayors and Leaders and senior offices in early September to discuss the Investment Fund and to agree how the investment will be allocated. Other UAs may also have shovel ready projects which are currently unfunded and which could also benefit from the revised approach. We discussed before the need to avoid investment in projects that are ready to go – and the economic benefits of those investments – being held up

by avoidable process and projects that are not ready. I believe we need to get investment into the opportunities that are being generated and will underpin our economic survival and drive our recovery.

As part of this meeting I would also like to discuss the additional layer of detail UAs are being asked to provide WECA to secure investment in these projects. To help speed up delivery we need to ensure existing business cases and economic studies that are found to be sound, are fully utilised. This will help ensure we don't waste valuable resources and time by repeating or repackaging work or requiring additional detail that adds little to our understanding and in fact delays delivery. I hope we can use this meeting to agree an expeditious process that moves key regional projects forward into delivery.

In March last year the Unitary Authorities were asked to put forward projects that required funding from the Investment Fund. At the time it was agreed that the Investment Fund would be regularly reviewed by Mayors and Leaders and that there would be opportunities for UAs to put forward new requests for funding should there be any slippage or changes to the Investment Fund over the course of the year. A year on from that exercise, and with the economic challenges we are facing, it is now even more urgent that we review the projects which are part of the Investment Fund so that we can ensure we are maximising the opportunity.

While I am confident that we will reach an agreement on how the Investment Fund is managed going forward, it is important that I underscore the significance of the above projects to Bristol's economic survival and recovery.

I have asked my officers to continue to work closely with your officers so that these key projects can be confirmed at committee in October. I hope we will be able to meet with our fellow leaders to discuss next steps for the Investment Fund as soon as possible.

Best wishes,



Marvin Rees
Mayor of Bristol

Mayor Marvin Rees
Bristol City Council
Mayor's Office
City Hall
Bristol
BS1 5TR

Via email Mayor@bristol.gov.uk

27 August 2020

Dear Marvin,

Delivering our Ambition

I am pleased to hear that we share a common goal of making our investment fund work harder and smarter for the benefit of all residents in the West of England.

You will know from the regular updates that you receive we have committed £220 million of the investment fund and the full £350m has been allocated to projects. However, for the reasons you correctly outline, officers from all of our Unitary Authorities are working together to identify additional short- and medium-term headroom in the investment fund. This will allow projects that have regional benefit and the potential to recycle funding back to the investment fund to come forward and be funded by future Committee decisions. In this regard, it would be helpful to have full visibility of the Bristol City Council programmes which you do not currently expect to deliver to timetable and your commitment that this funding can be used effectively to deliver on our regional ambitions.

I know that all our region's Unitary Authorities are looking at projects which could be brought forward and agree that early visibility on these will help us prioritise and come to a collective view on how to equitably reprofile our investment pipeline to maximise its regional benefit and impact. As we have discussed, we are arranging a meeting of Mayors and Leaders to discuss the principles behind the schemes you have highlighted with the other Joint Committee members in advance of October's meeting. I am copying them in to this reply as well as sending over the additional detail you have provided so that they can share their views and prepare for that meeting. In your letter to me of 25th August you quoted specific figures in relation to the investment fund and Local Growth Fund, I have asked officers to confirm these figures ahead of Tuesday's meeting.

I am aware of the schemes you have mentioned in your letters, and that officers from the Combined Authority and Bristol City Council are working to create fundable business cases for Hengrove Park and Bottleyard Studios for a future decision by the West of England Combined Authority Committee, in line with the assurance framework we have agreed with the Government. I understand that there is still some work required to produce these business cases and gain sign off from the independent reviewer, and it is going to be challenging to make this ready for all West of England Combined Authority Committee members to consider and make an investment decision for the scheduled October Committee. However, we can discuss this in more detail in our meeting on Tuesday. In relation to Colston Hall, you will recall that this has already received £8.5m from the Local Growth Fund and I understand that your officers are exploring other ways to fill the funding gap in this Bristol City Council programme.

On the topic of over programming, no council finance director in our region would consider over-programming their own budget by 50% and the Combined Authority is no different in this regard. It is important that we are able to complete the programmes we commit to as a region and that we are honest with ourselves and the public about being able to deliver on our ambitions. In the past our area had a reputation for not doing that, and I know that neither of us intend to return to that position.

All Combined Authority committee members have previously agreed that allocations should include funding for full programme delivery, rather than just the next stage of work in order to give officers and residents certainty on their funded programmes. I am happy to discuss this with the other committee members if you would now like to diverge from this previously agreed approach, but such a change might mean that previously agreed schemes would be put at risk.

Nevertheless, I would hope that you would agree that the development funding allocated to projects that don't yet have defined capital funding costs will deliver a pipeline of shovel ready schemes in the manner you suggest i.e. beyond the current envelope of available capital funding. I appreciate that as a number of schemes have recently been awarded development funding the probable capital funding requirements are not yet known, and this is creating a perception that there is more headroom available in the £350m than there is.

Temple Quarter is very important to the region and in order to progress our shared ambition I have recently discussed the scheme with both ministers and officials at the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and Number 10. I understand that Simon Clarke has recently written to the University to inform them that they are now advocating for the programme within the context of the spending review. I believe that this is in no small part thanks to our collective efforts in identifying the importance of this programme to our regional ambitions. I am pleased that our officers are working collectively on proposals for a Joint Delivery Team and hope this can be a model of collaborative delivery for the region in future to concentrate our resources on a programme where the local and regional benefits are so clearly evident. As we have discussed on many occasions, I am fully supportive of the initiative as it will have a significant positive impact on the whole West of England. I have asked my officers to share the details of the Joint Delivery Team with colleagues at Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire ahead of a formal decision, so that we can create and fund the team as soon as possible.

I look forward to continuing these positive discussions

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Bowles", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tim Bowles
Mayor of the West of England

Simon Clarke MP
Minister for Regional Growth & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Sent via Email: PSSimonClarke@communities.gov.uk

7 September 2020

Dear Simon

Next steps for West of England devolution

Thank you for your letter of 24 August 2020.

We are seeking a meeting with you and ministers/officials in HM Treasury to discuss our bold ambitions for our region and to understand the scale of the Government's appetite for further investment. We need an understanding of the scope of the deal before we engage the public in a consultation.

We wish to explore the scale of the Government's ambition around additional investment in key infrastructure, connectivity, housing delivery, skills, employment and regeneration projects that will drive our economic recovery.

We are keen to bring forward an ambitious and bold package of proposals for additional investment in key infrastructure, connectivity, housing delivery, skills, employment, energy and decarbonisation and regeneration projects that will drive our economic recovery. We can do this quickly once we understand the level of investment available.

As we stated in our previous letter to you, we are looking for a level of certainty regarding scale of investment that the Government is prepared to offer before we proceed with the public consultation on the expansion of the Combined Authority. The last time we consulted our population regarding the formation of WECA, we did so in the knowledge that there was a £1bn of additional investment from Government. We believe a similar investment proposal will be needed before any public consultation can take place if we are to be successful in gaining the necessary level of support.

We hope that we will be able to meet as a matter of urgency to discuss our ambitions and to understand the level of commitment Government can give regarding the further investment needed in our region if we are to play our full part in supporting economic recovery.

Tel: [REDACTED]

3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EW

Email: mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) covers Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire. WECA also supports the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Joint Committee, which includes North Somerset.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Bowles
Mayor of the West of England



Councillor Toby Savage
Leader of South Gloucestershire Council



Marvin Rees
Bristol Mayor



Councillor Dine Romero
Leader of Bath & North East Somerset Council



Councillor Donald Davies
Leader of North Somerset Council

Tel: [REDACTED]
3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EW
Email: mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk
www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk



Mayor of Bristol

Mayor Tim Bowles
West of England Combined Authority
3 Rivergate, Temple Quay
Bristol
BS1 6EW
mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

Reply to Marvin Rees
Telephone 0117 922 2420
E-mail mayor@bristol.gov.uk
Date 5 October 2020

Dear Tim,

I am writing to you wholly confidentially and would respectfully request that this letter is not shared.

As you know, Bristol has a highly ambitious agenda for inclusive growth, and I am keen that we collectively work with Government in helping drive the city, region and nation's economic recovery. However, given our experiences working with WECA (of which you know I have raised concerns both formally and informally on several occasions) and more recently partner behaviours at our CEOs, Mayors and Leaders meetings, I am writing to underline how serious I think this issue has become and to be clear on the need for change.

The West of England Combined Authority should be a key mechanism to enable us to progress some of our strategic infrastructure and development ambitions. Currently it is – I am sorry to say – not effective in doing so. Our concerns have been growing, and over the last 18 months we have made several requests to review the governance arrangements to ensure that the views, expertise and resources of the constituent councils are leveraged. We have also flagged the need to review resource allocation methodologies so that resource is fairly distributed to where need and demand exists, and to ensure investment is prioritised based on economic and social return, and going forward, on delivering the economic recovery the region will desperately need. These requests continue to be ignored. I have given this careful consideration and believe we have reached the point where something must change fundamentally in WECA's approach and behaviours in order to unlock greater progress. I have lost count of the number of decisions about issues being made in informal settings without notice, or WECA attempting to send key consultation responses or

pitches to government in our name without having undertaken meaningful engagement or having obtained sign-off from constituent members.

I would like to be in a position to support expansion to include North Somerset. However, based on experience to date, expanding the boundary of WECA to accommodate North Somerset would only compound our inability to have the needs of the city and its economic opportunity properly reflected in strategy and resource allocations. There is not time to undertake a process which fixes that in the current timescales, and my view is we should not rush in to an expansion given the many other factors at play – including the potential prize of a larger CA footprint encompassing the English side of the Western Gateway, as recently posited by Cllr Mark Hawthorne. The Western Gateway has quickly gained widespread support from ministers and local partners and it may be that this bolder option would provide a more ambitious platform for devolution, and enable a much clearer 'step-change' in devolution for the region.

Given our recent conversation following the meeting on 11 September I believe you recognise some of my concerns, and at this stage I would welcome us working together to agree a way forward in addressing governance and behaviours before matters become even more damaging to the long term future of the region.

I appreciate this will be a challenging letter to receive and I am sending it in the hope that by airing them frankly, these issues can finally be properly addressed to the satisfaction of all sides. I would welcome a conversation with you in the first instance, followed by further discussion with other constituent member leaders about how we can best develop our regional structures and working, to fully capitalise on the potential of Bristol and wider regional economy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marvin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Marvin Rees
Mayor of Bristol



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Luke Hall MP

Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 3440

Email: Luke.Hall@communities.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/mhclg

14 October 2020

Tim Bowles, Mayor of the West of England
Councillor Toby Savage, Leader of South
Gloucestershire Council
Marvin Rees, Bristol Mayor
Councillor Dine Romero, Leader of Bath & North East
Somerset Council
Councillor Donald Davies, Leader of North Somerset
Council

Dear Colleague,

You previously met with my predecessor, Minister Simon Clarke, about your ambition to expand the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to include North Somerset. I too can see the substantial benefits this could bring for the region and build on the successes you are already achieving.

As you are aware, achieving the expansion ahead of the May 2021 Mayoral election requires us to work at pace. Simon's letter of 3 August 2020 set out the legislative process, which takes some months, culminating in Parliamentary debates and approval to secondary legislation, which needs to be in force by late March 2021, before the election is called.

To be confident of the legislation being in force by then, the timetable Simon outlined in his letters to you would need to have been followed. That is your locally led consultation, following the preparation of a "governance review" and "scheme", should have started by early September enabling you to provide a summary of the responses to that consultation to us by 9 November.

Whilst that time has now passed without you starting the consultation, there is still a narrow window of opportunity. The timetable is very tight and not without risk, but to start the legislative process of expansion with the possibility of completing it by late March you will need to progress the following:

- You need to urgently prepare a governance review relating to the expansion to include North Somerset and scheme as statute requires and starting the public consultation – which you would need to do now;
- following the consultation, your authorities will want to decide how to proceed, and if you wish to progress with expansion, you will need to prepare a summary of the responses for the Secretary of State; if there is to be any possibility of making the legislation in time we must **receive this summary of responses by Friday 27 November 2020**;
- In parallel to this process, we will continue to have discussions with Treasury and other colleagues across Whitehall about your requests for additional, devolved funding, but in light of the tight timescales you must now work towards, these discussions must take place alongside the consultation process.
- The Secretary of State would then consider the consultation responses and all other relevant information available to him and determine if the statutory requirements have been met.
- If his decision were to be to proceed, my officials would aim to share a draft order with you in December on which we would need comment quickly, before it is finalised; we would

seek formal consent to the order in mid – late January from the councils, the combined authority and Mayor.

I know we all see the potential for an expanded WECA to substantially benefit the people and businesses there. The Government is committed to devolving powers and funding to Combined Authorities and see them as key delivery partners for investment where they exist. Expansion would enable key economic levers all being exercised over the same geography by a strong and accountable Mayor and Combined Authority, supporting you to lead the economic recovery of the region and the levelling up of opportunity, prosperity and growth.

I would encourage you to take the first step now to keep open the possibility of expanding WECA with the benefits that could bring. I am fully committed to help you realise the ambition of strengthening WECA, as I am confident it would benefit local people and build upon the great work you are already doing there.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Hall', written in a cursive style.

LUKE HALL MP

Ben Mosley

From: Mayor
Sent: 15 October 2020 17:48
To: mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk; Toby.Savage@southglos.gov.uk; Dine_Romero@bathnes.gov.uk; Donald.Davies@n-somerset.gov.uk
Cc: Mike Jackson; Councillor Craig Cheney
Subject: LH Ambition to Expand

Dear Tim, Toby, Dine and Don,

Following on from the letter we have received from Minister Luke Hall, I wanted to share my thoughts concerning the possibility of expanding WECA to include North Somerset particularly as I am unable to attend the Mayors' and Leaders' meeting tomorrow morning.

The letter from the Minister has not acknowledged the request we sent in September for a meeting with MHCLG and Treasury Officials to discuss the additional investment that WECA expansion would bring from Government. Since we first started to discuss the issue of WECA expansion over a year ago, I have consistently been clear that we need to clearly demonstrate to our populations how this administrative expansion will make a practical difference to their lives. We need certainty on the level of government investment that will be put into these schemes and the benefits they will unlock if we are going to be able to convince our populations of the value of such change. We would also need this certainty before proceeding with the public consultation on the Governance review.

The Minister has made it clear that the Government will not be able to provide certainty regarding the level of investment that could be unlocked, making it impossible for me to demonstrate in any meaningful way the potential benefits of expanding the Combined Authority to the people of Bristol.

I also believe that we should not rush in to an expansion given the many other factors at play – including the potential prize of a larger CA footprint and proposals to create a unitary council in Somerset.

I would like to be in a position to support expansion to include North Somerset, however without the certainty of additional investment from Government and the potential changes to Local Government in our region, I am unable to agree to proceed with public consultation at this stage.

Once again I am sorry that I am unable to attend tomorrow's meeting, however I wanted to share my position with you. Deputy Mayor Craig Cheney will be stepping in for me and I know he will feedback the outcome of any discussion that takes place.

Regards,



Marvin Rees
Mayor of Bristol

t: [REDACTED]
e: mayor@bristol.gov.uk

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Blog](#)

My [Privacy Notice](#)

Mayor's Office, Bristol City Council, City Hall, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR
Postal address: Mayor's Office, Bristol City Council, PO Box 3399, Bristol BS1 9NE+



Ben Mosley

From: Ben Mosley
Sent: 06 November 2020 14:04
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Expansion of WECA

Categories: Read and Done

FYI

From: Mayor <mayor@bristol.gov.uk>
Sent: 05 November 2020 18:04
To: Dine_Romero@Bathnes.Gov.uk; Donald.Davies@n-somerset.gov.uk; toby.savage@southglos.gov.uk; mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk
Subject: Expansion of WECA

Dear Tim, Toby, Dine and Don

We agreed I would write to you directly to outline some of the concerns I have raised over the last two years regarding WECA expansion. The point I have made repeatedly is that these concerns remain too important to be skirted over.

We need to be able to clearly evidence to our populations how this administrative expansion will make a material difference to their lives. This is essential if we are going to be able to convince our populations of the value of such change, even more so if we are going to make a priority of expanding this political organisation in the face of the pandemic and the deepest economic depression in decades.

I set this out again in July, as formal talks with Government were being planned and over the summer I was clear about the questions that would need to be addressed.

While I recognise your frustration. I hope you recognise mine coming from the fact that I have repeatedly raised concerns, which have never been addressed, and now, one minute to midnight, I am being asked to make a decision that I have been clear would be dependent on those issue being addressed. The work has not been done.

In letters sent to Tim on 30th April, 29th July, 25th August, 5th October and 15th October, my administration and I have been clear about the concerns we have regarding WECA's expansion given the current challenges around delivery and we have been equally clear about need to have a firm commitment from Government regarding additional investment for the region.

It is worth me sharing again the reason we joined the Combined Authority in 2016. It was not to set up a new political structure. We joined in order to help us secure the investment we need for our city's prosperity - inclusive, sustainable growth.

1. Investment

We have sought investment and commitment for the following:

- Mass rapid transport system. This is essential for our connectivity, economic inclusion and decarbonisation our transport system as our city is predicted to grow by nearly 100,000 over the next 25 years. It must link to Parks & Rides (which need to be delivered), national rail links, the bus networks and must cross our borders to enable residents and commuters to leave their cars at home.
- Hengrove. 1200 homes to help tackle our housing crisis.

- Temple Quarter. One of the most exciting development opportunities in the UK.
- Bottleyard Studios
- Park and Rides.

In August when talks began with Government, Bristol's Deputy Mayor Craig Cheney attended the meeting with the Local Government Minister Simon Clarke and made it clear that a commitment for additional investment in these projects would be needed prior to consultation. The Minister agreed to make the case to the HM Treasury and set up a meeting with Government officials to discuss an additional investment package. Government subsequently cancelled the meeting between officials. Since that time, we are aware of no meaningful discussion with Government about the additional funding that would be needed to support and expand combined authority.

In September West of England Leaders sent a request to the new Minister for Local Government, Luke Hall, requesting a meeting with MHCLG and Treasury Officials to discuss the additional investment that a WECA expansion would attract from Government. Unfortunately that request was not even acknowledged by the Minister and the Government have made it clear that they will not be able to provide certainty regarding the level of investment that could be unlocked.

This disappointment has been compounded by the fact that the Government could not commit to the minimum uplift in funding required to maintain the current rate of WECA investment per head if North Somerset were to join.

2) Investment allocations

We have been clear that we would need clarity and certainty around WECA's approach to investment allocations.

We need to discuss and understand the extent to which the scale of the economic challenge, opportunity and return combined with characteristics of the population such as size, the readiness of schemes and levels of deprivation shape the allocation of investment versus simply allocating equal shares irrespective of these considerations. This should also include a recognition that Bristol represents around 2/3rds of the region's economy and around half the population. Supporting a strong Bristol, including investment in the infrastructure needed to support the economy, is critical to the West of England.

We also requested the incorporation of the Global Sustainable Development Goals into WECA's decision making, whereby projects in need of investment are also assessed on their contribution to delivery of the SDGs.

As I have said in letters sent to you in July, August and September, our focus needs to be on rebuilding our economy and we should be prioritising investment in shovel ready projects, which will have the greatest impact on regional growth and deprivation, and should form the basis on how funding is allocated going forward.

These are the kinds of issues that have needed to be resolved for us to grow confidence in the WECA structure, particular when we are being asked to make decisions that may cede sovereignty to that structure. Despite us raising concerns repeatedly, the issues have not been explored or addressed in any meaningful way, further eroding my confidence that expansion will benefit the people of Bristol.

3) Governance

Moving from three to four local authorities will dilute Bristol's voice in the combined authority. This is a concern for all the reasons listed above and more.

I need to be sure Bristol's interests will be safeguarded. That is important from Bristol perspective. It's also important from the regional economy.

We have had reason to be concerned. Comments have been made about managing Bristol's ambition and growth for fear of the impact it would have on residents of neighbouring authorities; comments have been about Bristol getting too much; certainty hangs over the level of opposition there might be to some of our most important projects tackling housing, transport and jobs. The added risk is that while current leaders might understand the importance of these projects to Bristol and the West of England, their successors might fall into the trap of trying to

minimise the impact of a successful city on the wider region. We need the governance structures to protect us against this.

Our concerns have been growing, and over the last 18 months we have made several requests to review the governance arrangements to ensure that the views, expertise and resources of the constituent councils are leveraged. These issues have not been explored or addressed in any meaningful way. My most recent letter didn't even get a response. We haven't had sufficient assurance from WECA itself that it understands the importance of investment in Bristol or that it is committed to diving these investments forward.

4) Delivery

I have written to WECA several times raising my concerns that WECA is failing to deliver on major projects and to attract additional investment for key priorities such as housing. We have a number of key projects that remain in limbo and have been delayed from one meeting to the next.

I believe the West of England Combined Authority should be a driver of progress including our strategic infrastructure and development ambitions. Currently it is – I am sorry to say - not effective in doing so. Rather than driving delivery and making our case to government, WECA has become a combination of a local representative of national government and a funding organisation. Our relationship is not one where we work together to deliver major projects but one of funder-bidder.

We have also flagged the need to review resource allocation methodologies so that resource is fairly distributed to where need and demand exists, and to ensure investment is prioritised based on economic and social return, and going forward, on delivering the economic recovery the region will desperately need. I am sorry to say that our requests have been ignored and as result our ability to secure investment for shovel ready projects that would drive our region's economic recovery have repeatedly been frustrated.

I have been clear that I would like to be in a position to support expansion to include North Somerset. But we have to deal seriously with Bristol's concerns. The case for expansion has to be proven with real evidence. There has to be a deal or else we are being asked to take a huge risk by giving more power to a structure that has not delivered as we would have liked and through which some have either sought, or suggested the possibility, of frustrating our city ambitions, without any clarity on the potential gain.

I have shared repeatedly that these negotiations could have started over a year ago. Regrettably this opportunity was not taken and we now find ourselves working in a different context whereby we need to focus on rebuilding our economy in post-Brexit world.

Bristol is a city of half a million people which drives our regional economy. I need evidence and if I am asked to take a risk, I need to know the city's prize and the benefits expansion will bring to the people of Bristol. Without the certainty of addition investment from Government and the reassurance needed about how that investment is to be allocated, I am unable to proceed further with this process.

Regards

Marvin



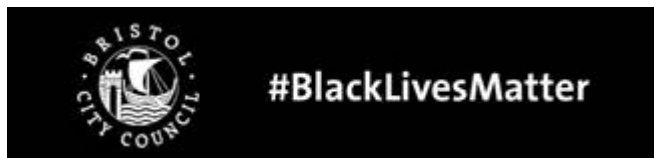
Marvin Rees
Mayor of Bristol

t: [REDACTED]
e: mayor@bristol.gov.uk

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Blog](#)

My [Privacy Notice](#)

Mayor's Office, Bristol City Council, City Hall, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR
Postal address: Mayor's Office, Bristol City Council, PO Box 3399, Bristol BS1 9NE *



Dedicated | Respect | Ownership | Curious | Collaborative



Luke Hall MP
Minister for Regional Growth & Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

6th November 2020

Dear Luke,

Thank you for your engagement in the process of bringing the benefits of devolution to the people of North Somerset by enlarging the West of England Combined Authority.

As we set out in our letter to Simon Clarke of 11th August, we the undersigned all continue to believe that there is significant potential for residents right across the West of England in enlarging the Combined Authority. Thank you also for your personal engagement with colleagues in the Treasury regarding the financial asks which could potentially have brought an additional £900m to our region, reinvigorating Temple Meads to make it a real gateway to our region, provided additional support for our regional mass transit plans and helped bring new, well paid jobs to our region by supporting innovation and new technologies, plus essential adult skills training and retraining as we equip the West of England for the new economic challenges ahead.

Unfortunately, despite your assurances that conversations with Treasury colleagues regarding the additional investment that an expansion of the Combined Authority would bring would take place once the Formal Consultation process had been opened discussions amongst political leaders of the West of England Combined Authority members have not come to a positive conclusion to agree to North Somerset joining to meet the timeline ahead of the 2021 elections. We are particularly disappointed by this as there had been an agreement amongst leaders at the outset of this process that it was the right thing to do for the region. We are afraid to say that party politics has got in the way.

We recognise that the residents of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset will all therefore miss out on the additional jobs and investment that would have been brought to the region had the expansion been able to go ahead. We also recognise that this is a huge missed opportunity and we would like to put on record our regret that this this situation has come to pass.

You and other ministers have been clear in the meetings we have had that Combined Authorities are the route to further major funding for our region and we all had recognised this. We would be grateful if you and ministerial colleagues would continue to support the WECA bid for the regeneration of Temple Quarter. You will know that the West of England Mayor has been supportive of this bid owing to its regional significance and we remain collectively keen to see this delivered for the region.



We all remain fully committed to enlarging the West of England Combined Authority to ensure the benefits we have outlined are felt by all our residents and look forward to restarting these conversations as soon as a political consensus can be agreed by all political leaders in the region.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Bowles
Mayor of the West of England

Councillor Toby Savage
Leader of South Gloucestershire Council

Councillor Dine Romero
Leader of Bath & North East Somerset Council

Councillor Donald Davies
Leader of North Somerset Council



Marvin Rees

Mayor of Bristol

By email to: mayor@bristol.gov.uk

10th November 2020

Dear Marvin,

Thank you for your confidential letter from early October which you asked not to be shared further. We have also had a number of subsequent emails and conversations.

As I have said before, discussions regarding the governance and expansion of the Combined Authority are not my sole prerogative, we must act with unanimity, as has been made abundantly clear in our discussions with the Combined Authority's other leaders over the last week. Now that those conversations have come to a conclusion I wanted to respond to your substantive points.

As you know, I am personally committed to correcting the anomaly of North Somerset being part of our Local Enterprise Partnership and a part of our functional economy but not being part of the Combined Authority. I also believe we owe it to the people of North Somerset if their Council leadership want to see the boundaries expanded to do everything we can to help them and the wider region, realise those benefits, potentially adding £485m to our economy and creating 2,500 new jobs. I believe there is a great deal of potential benefit to the whole region of enlarging the size of the Combined Authority; allowing us to operate at scale and tackle some of the intractable issues the region faces, such as strengthening inclusion, driving up productivity, cutting our carbon emissions and improving air quality, not to mention key regional projects like the improvements around Temple Quarter and the Mass Rapid Transit scheme that benefits residents of the whole region, including North Somerset. I know that you recognise the importance of these issues in Bristol so I am disappointed that you will not agree to follow the process set out by Government to expand the Combined Authority to include North Somerset, despite your earlier assurances and the work done to date.

I am pleased that you are now keen to see the Combined Authority grow further and welcome Gloucestershire and other areas into the West of England Combined Authority, given I know that when we discussed this some time ago, you told me that your Cabinet did not agree to this for political reasons. However, I struggle to see why you now seem to be in favour of Gloucestershire joining WECA but do not want to see North Somerset admitted, who we already work with, as this is on the table today and we have already begun tentative discussions with Government about the potential.

Ministers have been clear that the process and timeline we need to follow is tight, but we had an opportunity to get that process completed ahead of the 2021 election. We needed to open the public consultation to demonstrate our political willingness in the region to take the next step in order for discussions regarding financial settlements to begin.

We have a strong story to tell regarding the return on investment our region offers, so I feel those conversations could have proceeded positively. Since creating a Combined Authority, we have increased the size of our region's economy considerably. Thanks to the work of our investment fund, we have created 4000 new jobs and more than 13000 people have new skills and

Tel: +44 (0)117 332 1493

3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EW

Email: mayor@westofengland-ca.gov.uk

www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk



qualifications. Bristol has seen the benefits of this and has in fact received around 50% of the funding that has been allocated to our councils from the Investment Fund, along with a great deal of the benefit from pan-regional projects, such as MetroWest and our employment and skills programmes.

You have spoken of the Western Gateway concept, but you will recall from our joint discussions with ministers that they have been very clear that Combined Authority powers and funding will not be subsumed by these pan-regional bodies. Other Gateway partners recognise this and have said so publicly. We should not be distracted by the idea of something that will not deliver for regional or local projects. Ministers have also said that wider local Government reform is not currently a priority for Whitehall and should not be a priority for local government for the foreseeable future either, so we should not be distracted by this.

You outline some general concerns and broad statements where you feel the needs of Bristol have been under represented in the past. The Governance review that all members of the Combined Authority approved in July 2019 was designed to update and improve the way we operate, nonetheless, I am happy to explore the specific examples you have based your statements on, so that we can ensure we make meaningful progress. I assume these are the issues you raised in your email of Thursday 5th November, but if there are other points, we should add them to our meeting agenda. I will let your office contact mine with your availability. However, I would reiterate that, as you know, I cannot agree to changes in the way that funding has been allocated or make any commitments for future spending without the agreement of all members of the Combined Authority. Our decision making requires us to make decisions collectively and on the basis of what is best for the region, not what is best for a single member of the committee. I would also emphasise that our Government gateway review to unlock the next five years of funding for the Combined Authority (some £150m in total) has just reported positively on our assurance framework and investment criteria for taxpayer's money and I am sure that you would not want to put this future funding for the region at risk.

The city of Bristol has been a winner from devolution in the West of England, and I look forward to this continuing to secure the City and our region's long-term future prosperity.

I would appreciate if you too would do the courtesy of treating this letter in confidence.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Bowles
Mayor of the West of England

Ben Mosley

From: Mayor <mayor@bristol.gov.uk>
Sent: 11 November 2020 14:01
To: luke.hall@communities.gov.uk
Cc: pslukehall@communities.gov.uk
Subject: Bristol & WECA

Dear Luke

My colleagues across the West of England have written to you about the expansion of WECA. I am very happy to discuss this issue with you directly if this would be helpful. My office can arrange a call.

I wrote to you a few weeks ago about visiting Bristol, and I hope once the Covid rate is falling and the current restrictions are lifted this can be arranged. It would present a good opportunity for us to meet in person and I can show you some of the key projects, in particular Temple Quarter and Hengrove, which we are focusing on to generate jobs, new homes and green growth.

I look forward to speaking with you soon.



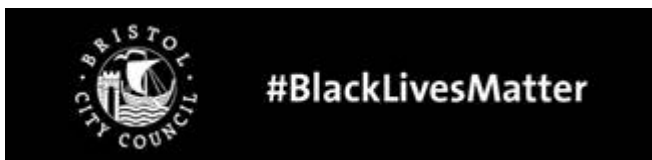
Marvin Rees
Mayor of Bristol

t: + [REDACTED]
e: mayor@bristol.gov.uk

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Blog](#)

My [Privacy Notice](#)

Mayor's Office, Bristol City Council, City Hall, College Green, Bristol BS1 5TR
Postal address: Mayor's Office, Bristol City Council, PO Box 3399, Bristol BS1 9NE ;



Dedicated | Respect | Ownership | Curious | Collaborative