

**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	WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and those present introduced themselves.
2	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Ashe and Cllr Mhairi Threlfall.
3	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011 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.
4	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 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.
5	ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS; PETITIONS; STATEMENTS) Two questions had been received from Christina Biggs and the replies had been circulated. A statement had been received from Christina Biggs and this was verbally submitted at the meeting.

	<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.