

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

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

Present:

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

In Attendance from North Somerset Council

Cllr Mike Bird
Cllr Huw James

Officers in attendance:

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

Minutes

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

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

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

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

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

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

The meeting closed at 12:39pm

APPENDIX 1

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

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

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

1. Climate emergency planning update (agenda item 15)

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

Immediacy of action:

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

Climate Emergency action plan:

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

Governance:

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

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

Resource priorities:

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

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

2. Consultation with ward councillors and residents

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

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

3. Status of the Joint Spatial Plan

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

4. Investment Fund gateway review

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

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