

Agenda item 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Climate emergency action plan

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

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

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

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

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

Response paper to the JLTP4

General comments

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The scrutiny commission sub-committee recommends:

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

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

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

Specific comments

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

Connectivity beyond the West of England

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

Connectivity within the West of England

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

Local connectivity

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

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

Neighbourhood connectivity

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

Further Submissions

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