

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

Wednesday, 17 June 2020, 10:30 am
Zoom virtual meeting, broadcast on the WECA YouTube channel

Present:

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

Present from North Somerset

Cllr Mike Bird, Cllr Peter Crew, Cllr Huw James

Officers in attendance:

Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal & Democratic Services	Jess Lee, Head of Policy & Strategy
David Carter, Director of Infrastructure	Ian Hird, Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager
Stephen Bashford, Director of Business & Skills	

Apologies:

Cllr John Ashe, South Gloucestershire Council

Minutes

1	WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting which was being held virtually and streamed live via the Authority's Youtube channel.
2	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE An apology for absence had been received from Cllr John Ashe.
3	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations of interest.
4	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING Ian Hird, Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager, confirmed that the last meeting on 18 March 2020 had been inquorate and therefore no formal minutes had been taken. However, the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020 had been recirculated for approval together with the Committee's comments on the WECA Committee reports from March. Agreed: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.
5	ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS; STATEMENTS; PETITIONS) The following statements were received:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. David Redgewell – Transport issues 2. Alison Allan – Climate Emergency Action Plan 3. Gordon Richardson – Protecting disabled passengers - social distancing on buses and trains 4. Cllr Geoff Gollop – Item 19 - Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan specifically; Other items generally on WECA committee agendas 5. Dave Andrews – Trams 6. Gavin Smith – West of England bus strategy / rapid transit 7. Cllr Clive Stevens – West of England Bus Strategy 8. Christina Biggs – Covid-19; MetroWest; Joint Local Transport Plan 9. Dick Daniel – Sustainable transport improvements <p>David Redgewell, Cllr Geoff Gollop, Gavin Smith, Cllr Clive Stevens, Christina Biggs and Dick Daniel all addressed the committee in person.</p> <p>In addition, one question had been submitted and the response had been circulated prior to the meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alan Morris - Funding of walking and cycling measures. <p>All statements and the question and reply were published on the Authority’s website.</p>
6	<p>CHAIR’S BUSINESS / ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The following points were raised in relation to the public statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was reported that there should be more opportunity for Councillors to feed into and lead the various issues coming forward, specifically on transport and to try to avoid situations where Councillors were not kept informed. There was a sentiment expressed by several councillors that the volume of reports and paperwork coming through made effective scrutiny of items difficult and this could be something that the Scrutiny Committee Sub-Groups could look at in more detail. It could also be an issue for discussion at a future informal meeting. Members were assured that the processes included early publication of agenda papers and full scrutiny of reports via the Authority’s Boards. The change in the frequency of meetings meant that the meetings had more business when they came around. • Several points were also made about inaccuracies of labelled roads and geographical areas in the report on the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and it was asked whether these could be rectified; it was noted that inaccuracies in the report would be corrected in advance of the WECA / Joint Committee meeting; • Members asked whether the Committee’s Sub-Groups could be formalised and also requested that the councillors from constituent authorities be informed of proposals affecting their wards. This last point would form part of the Committee’s formal comments to the WECA / Joint Committee.

REVIEW OF 19 JUNE WECA COMMITTEE AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE REPORTS

WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed the content of the reports for the upcoming WECA Committee and Joint Committee being held on Friday 19 June 2020.

The Committee received presentations on the reports from Jess Lee, Head of Policy & Strategy (on the Covid-19 crisis update), David Carter, Director of Infrastructure (Transport reports) and Malcolm Coe, Director of Finance (Finance reports). The following comments were raised:

- Members asked whether the Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce meeting minutes could be made available. The Taskforce was leading action on the regional economic recovery response, which included lobbying government across the different business sectors, with other work going on through the M9 and other groups. The Mayors and Leaders were all part of the Taskforce. It was confirmed that scrutiny of LEP Board formed part of the Committee's functions;
- Councillors asked whether a package of materials could be sent out in respect of the help offered through the Future Bright Programme;
- The Committee urged that all Local Authorities and the regional Authority all work together to ensure the economic recovery be as smooth as possible;
- Members were concerned that the culture and creative sectors and retail and agricultural industries be included in any future planning;
- The Climate Emergency Action Plan would be worked up in conjunction with the Covid-19 recovery plan;
- The WECA Committee was being requested to update the Boards' and Committees' Terms of References to embed Climate Emergency into all the Authority's decision-making processes;
- The changes in transport use had seen an effect on air quality with noticeable changes in peak time traffic, although there was a chance that congestion could be higher than previously when people returned to their workplaces. There was a challenge in matching demand with supply on local buses;
- Members asked for data on the number of people wearing face masks on public transport, although it was acknowledged that legal enforcement was difficult and social distancing was difficult for some users without internal changes to the interior of the buses;
- It was welcomed that the Bus Strategy would be reviewed in 18 months' time;
- There were concerns that a consultation was planned on the Spatial Development Strategy during May and June 2021 which coincided with mayoral and local elections;
- It was asked that "Park and Cycle" sites and cycle parking at bus stops be considered in future planning;
- That WECA be asked to consider the relationship between consultation and development of strategies;
- That geographic names replace the Metrowest 1, 2, 2A, etc. descriptions in future;
- The public confidence and mood was likely to change when a vaccine or cure was discovered;
- The Committee stated that they felt that the comments made previously on the Climate Emergency work had not been adequately captured in the update report and that the level of urgency be taken more seriously;
- The Committee asked that Mayor Bowles attend a future meeting. It was confirmed that all the Mayors and Leaders would be invited to a specific future meeting for a discussion on the climate emergency;
- WECA was providing short term loans to constituent authorities if needed;
- WECA had been working closely with the local authorities with emergency funding but

	<p>would be looking at the second tranche recovery loan key areas via the taskforce meetings to set the criteria;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was confirmed that no WECA Funds were deposited with Bristol Credit Union; <p>Agreed:</p> <p>(1) That the Committee's comments on the WECA / Joint Committee reports be agreed in consultation with the Chair and members and submitted to the WECA / Joint Committee meeting as part of the decision-making process (note – these comments are set out at Appendix A);</p> <p>(2) That the Chair of the WECA Overview and Scrutiny Committee attend the WECA / Joint Committee to present the Overview & Scrutiny Committee's comments in person.</p>
8	<p>MEETING ARRANGEMENTS AND FORWARD PLAN FOR JOINT MEETINGS OF THE WECA COMMITTEE AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE</p> <p>The Committee received a report summarising meeting arrangements and the latest edition of the 2020/21 Forward Plan for the WECA Committee and the West of England Joint Committee.</p> <p>The report set out the Committee dates, meeting arrangements and the Forward Plan.</p> <p>Agreed: That the meeting arrangements and Forward Plan be noted.</p>
	<p>Next meeting: Wednesday, 7 October 2020, 10.30 am</p>

APPENDIX A

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 – 19 JUNE 2020

Having considered the papers for the 19th June meeting, I wish to raise the following matters on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Climate emergency planning update (agenda item 22)

Back in January, we expressed our disappointment about the lack of pace and urgency in taking forward the regional climate emergency work. The Climate Emergency was declared in July last year, but we are told the Action Plan is now delayed until October. It was due now.

We do, however, acknowledge and accept that aspects of the plan will need to be reviewed in light of Covid-19 and that recovery planning and climate emergency planning must be linked.

We also feel though that our previous comments have been ignored – in January, we recommended in the strongest possible terms that a new Climate Emergency Board should be established to drive forward the regional response and to ensure that effective actions / priorities are taken forward as quickly as possible. This evidently is not being pursued.

We also raised the issue that the £250k allocated to support regional climate emergency action was inadequate and should be increased and that WECA should take on an additional employee to concentrate/ focus / champion / co-ordinate activity. Again, nothing has happened.

We remain very concerned about the lack of urgency in driving forward an effective regional response and again invite Mayor Tim Bowles to attend one of our meetings to discuss this issue as soon as possible.

2. Update to the Constitution (agenda item 12) and effectiveness of scrutiny

We note that under the Combined Authority governance model, the number of formal decision-taking committee meetings is being reduced to 4 per year.

We feel it is essential that the role of scrutiny is enhanced moving forwards to help ensure transparency and public accountability around the Combined Authority's decision taking. To that end, we intend at our next informal meeting to discuss proposals to strengthen the role of scrutiny, particularly in relation to our current sub-groups which mirror the WECA Boards (Transport; Planning and Housing; Business; Skills).

We would like the committee to consider strengthening the role of scrutiny, including reviewing the accessibility of regional meetings, like the Regional Transport Board, so that all or part of these meetings are held in public.

3. Quality assurance of reports, with specific reference to agenda item 19 – Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

We wish to raise concerns about the quality assurance of some reports brought for your consideration under the WECA logo.

We received a statement from Cllr Gollop, which is also before you today, that raises particular issues about proposals being brought forward as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. It is very clear to us that some of the proposals have not been the subject of any consultation with either local councillors or residents. Cllr Massey has also submitted a statement to this meeting on the issue of the lack of involvement with ward councillors regarding the cycling/walking proposals.

We acknowledge that this is a case where the local authority has evidently not adequately fulfilled its responsibility to consult effectively – nevertheless the report is presented under the WECA logo, which carries a reputational risk in that it appears that WECA is not interested in the views of local residents when it is in fact the underlying Council that has not fulfilled its responsibilities.

We urge you to work with the unitary authorities and learn lessons from this in terms of the quality assurance of future reports.

With specific regard to the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, we strongly urge that you ensure that as individual schemes are brought forward, full local consultation takes place in each and every case with local residents and councillors.

4. Regional Economic Recovery Taskforce (as referenced at agenda item 11)

We welcomed the update on the Taskforce – in order to assist our scrutiny role and keep us informed, we ask that the minutes of Taskforce meetings are shared with us.

On the wider issue of the role of the Taskforce, we urge the WECA Mayor and the political leaders of all the West of England authorities to work together and collaborate on the regional recovery to deliver the outcomes our residents and businesses need.

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