

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

Monday, 11 October 2021, 1.00 pm  
Council Chamber, Bath Guildhall

### Present:

Cllr Winston Duguid, Bath and North East Somerset, Chair  
Cllr Hal MacFie, Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Cllr Geoff Gollop, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Gary Hopkins, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Brenda Massey, Bristol City Council

Cllr Steve Pearce, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Andrew Varney, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Brian Allinson, South Gloucestershire Council  
Cllr James Arrowsmith, South Gloucestershire Council  
Cllr John Ashe, South Gloucestershire Council  
Cllr Tony Dyer, Bristol City Council (as substitute for Cllr Ed Plowden)

### Also in Attendance:

Cllr Huw James, North Somerset Council  
Metro Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority

### Officers In Attendance:

Patricia Greer, Chief Executive, WECA  
Stephen Bashford, Director of Business and Skills  
Kathryn Vowles, Interim Director of Infrastructure  
Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services  
Ian Hird, Scrutiny Manager

Pete Davis, Head of Grant Management & Assurance  
Peter Mann, Head of Strategic Transport Integration  
Tim Milgate, Democratic Services Officer

### Apologies:

Cllr Ed Plowden, Bristol City Council (Cllr Tony Dyer attended as substitute)

### Minutes

Ian Hird, Scrutiny Manager opened the meeting and presided over the proceedings up until a Chair was elected under Item 2.

1	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Ed Plowden. Cllr Tony Dyer attended as substitute.</p> <p>Cllrs Peter Crew and Mike Bird from North Somerset Council had also sent apologies.</p>
2	<p><b>ELECTION OF CHAIR</b></p> <p>It was proposed by Cllr MacFie and seconded by Cllr Gollop and unanimously:</p> <p><b>Agreed:</b> That Cllr Winston Duguid be elected Chair of WECA Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee for municipal year 2021/22.</p>
3	<p><b>ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR</b></p> <p>It was agreed that, rather than formally elect a Vice-Chair for Municipal Year 2021/22, on any occasion when the Chair was absent, a Vice-Chair be chosen for that meeting only from amongst the Board nominees.</p>

4	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest declared.</p>
5	<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meetings held on 23 June 2021 and 20 September 2021 were agreed as correct records subject to recording Cllr Gary Hopkins apologies for the meeting held on 20 September 2021.</p> <p>Further to the meeting held on 23 June 2021, Cllr Huw James asked whether there was any further progress on reinstating the Regional Transport Forum. Peter Mann, Head of Strategic Transport Integration, stated that there would be a requirement for such meetings through the enhanced partnership arrangements and a further update on this could be circulated.</p>
6	<p><b>ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC (QUESTIONS; STATEMENTS)</b></p> <p>Members of the Public had submitted one question and four statements to the meeting. The response to the question had been circulated prior to the meeting. Two members of the public (Mr Dave Redgewell and Mr Graham Ellis) attended the meeting and addressed the Committee for up to three minutes each on the topic of their statements.</p>
7	<p><b>CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS / BUSINESS</b></p> <p>The Chair announced that Members of WECA Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee would have "observer" status on the Authority's Boards, some of which held joint meetings. The next meeting would be a meeting of the Planning &amp; Housing Board on 22 October 2021 which Cllr James Arrowsmith indicated he could attend.</p> <p>The Metro Mayor Dan Norris attended the meeting. The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayor Norris stated that his primary objective as Mayor was to secure a larger budget from the Government for the region as part of the "levelling up agenda" so that the whole region could benefit from extra investment but that this would require the UA regions to work collaboratively;</li> <li>• Although the region was relatively prosperous there were pockets of deprivation which would particularly benefit for investment and joined-up thinking in areas such as public transport;</li> <li>• The area was already ahead of other areas of the country in things such as green jobs and green awareness and had an opportunity to lead nationally and globally in these areas;</li> <li>• The pandemic had led to innovations such as increased home working which could help with the green agenda by cutting down on unnecessary journeys so long as everybody could connect;</li> </ul> <p>The Members of the Committee were able to ask questions of the Mayor and the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may be difficult to secure more funds from government in some areas and therefore efficient usage of existing monies was paramount;</li> <li>• Investment in transport needed to include integration, such as transport links to new train stations that had opened or were planned for the future;</li> <li>• Members were keen to stress the importance of retrofitting existing housing stock to make them more environmentally friendly;</li> <li>• The cost of making Bristol "net zero" was estimated to be around £9bn so additional monies would be needed from government. The Mayor reiterated that his aim was</li> </ul>

	<p>that all areas of the region would get more for everybody's benefit;</p> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <p>The Mayor was thanked for his attendance at WECA Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee.</p>
8	<p><b>UPDATE AND REVIEW OF 15 OCTOBER WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY AND WEST OF ENGLAND JOINT COMMITTEE REPORTS</b></p> <p>The Committee reviewed the reports to be considered at the Joint Meeting of the West of England Combined Authority and West of England Combined Authority at its meeting on 15 October 2021. The following comments were raised on the following items:</p> <p><b>Supporting the decarbonisation of aviation (item 9)</b></p> <p>Stephen Bashford, Director of Business and Skills, gave a summary of the report which described the current shape and scale of the aerospace sector in the region and set out what national and regional initiatives were in place (or were emerging) to support the industry on the journey to decarbonising aviation. The report also identified a number of opportunities to be developed potentially into a joint plan with industry, to ensure the aerospace sector in the West of England could effectively restructure and could continue to be a major source of sustainable and well-paid jobs for residents.</p> <p>The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was estimated that around 98,000 jobs in the region were dependent on the aviation industry, with the jobs often being high skilled and high valued. Those skills could help other industries seeking carbon neutrality;</li> <li>• It was asked whether further monies could be used to invest in green investment rather than ad hoc decision-making. In response it was noted that it was an opportunity to leverage investment from government;</li> <li>• A local company had apparently secured pre-orders for over 1000 aircraft which presented a local opportunity. It was noted however that many of these would be replacing older more polluting stock. However, the investment in hydrogen fuel was falling behind. There was also a potential danger with tower cranes and light aircraft/drone use locally;</li> <li>• Other high carbon industries were also important in the region such as shipping and construction with potential impacts on jobs within those industries. It was noted that the local employment plan would align allowing individuals to remain in those sectors;</li> <li>• It was asked that the report be scrutinised <b>at</b> regular intervals through KPIs. It was also asked whether a list of the 14 most important aerospace industries could be circulated;</li> <li>• Rather than looking at decarbonisation of fuel the best value for money for the region was the most important element such as development of electric planes and a menu from which to choose options. This initial menu would be prioritised in the next phase of the plan;</li> <li>• It was also noted that the West of England was working with other authorities and the wider area on these issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>Investment Fund (item 10)</b></p> <p>Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services, summarised this report which sought approval for feasibility, development and delivery funding, and for change requests for schemes within the current approved programme.</p> <p>The following points were raised:</p>

- The investment fund had freed up some “headroom” for reinvestment which had been due to timetabling of other projects;
- The cost of building materials was being monitored and discussions with DfT and other government departments were taking place. A fuller picture would emerge in the next quarter;
- All the schemes had submitted outline and full business cases which had been submitted to the Committee.
- Pete Davis would confirm the status of the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone and Infrastructure project.

### **City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (item 11)**

This report would update the committee on the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), the next steps, and to confirm the key principles behind the Local Contribution.

The following points were raised:

- The A38 appeared to not be listed as a city corridor, and this would be investigated;
- This was not just about improving bus services for all but stopping individuals taking their cars into the congested urban areas, although there were challenges around flood zones etc;
- It was important to recognise the role that WECA could play in this as the strategic overview;
- There were inequalities along some of the travel corridors such as the M32 which suffered from poor air quality and lack of public transport;
- The minimum frequency of proposed routes was welcomed and would be monitored. The Mayor would be held directly to account by the government via a website tracking the progression of the targets;
- There were acknowledged challenges around key routes as to how to incorporate bus priority lanes etc;
- Further work was being carried out for the Brislington Railway line and nothing was currently being ruled out;

### **Bus Service Improvement Plan (item 12)**

The Committee was to be updated on the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan as required by the National Bus Strategy and to seek delegated authority to approve the final document. The following points were raised:

- There was not always a clear line of responsibility on management of bus stops, such as updated timetabling and litter bin access. There was a plea that any programme of updates to these bus stop environs start with the areas worst affected;
- It was stated that a “tap on tap off” service could be launched soon and that would give more detail on usage figures also;
- It was requested that further work be carried out to find where people travelled to work as there may be a demand that was unknown;
- It was also requested whether USB charging could be introduced so e-tickets could be accessed;
- There were criticisms over the chopping and changing of the services during covid. It was noted that the transport operators were acting under emergency legislation but the situation was becoming more stable with a gradual return to normality;

### **Supported bus services procurement (item 13)**

This report was seeking approval from the Committee to carry out the procurement of supported bus services across the region and delegated authority to award contracts. This report was required as the value of the contracts to be awarded will exceed the threshold of the current delegated decisions. The following points were raised:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A query was raised about the Cribbs-Patchway Metrobus link and whether this could run or link to South Bristol. In response it was noted that there was an acknowledged gap and the Authority would need to think about where this service began and ended its routes;</li> </ul> <p><b>Proposed future leadership structure (item 18)</b></p> <p>The Committee noted the proposed changes in WECA’s management structure. The following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Authority were urged to get moving on its climate change commitments and to appoint someone short term to the proposed director role if necessary;</li> <li>• There was some concern over the longer-term use of interim appointments rather than permanent recruitment.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee also wished to place on record its concern regarding late amendments made to reports at the Joint Committee/WECA Committee meeting as no proper scrutiny could be carried out.</p> <p>Agreed: That the comments made, as summarised in Appendix 1 below, be submitted to the meeting of the WECA Committee/Joint Committee to take into account as part of its decision-making process.</p>
	<p>The next meeting would be held on Monday, 24 January 2022, 1.00 pm at a venue to be confirmed.</p>

**APPENDIX 1 - COMMENTS FROM 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 –  
15 OCTOBER 2021**

Following our meeting held on 11 October, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee wishes to present the following comments:

**a. Metro Mayor’s attendance at Scrutiny**

We were pleased to again welcome Metro Mayor Dan Norris to our meeting and had a useful discussion around his key priorities. We look forward to continuing this constructive engagement.

We fully support the Mayor’s stated ambition to attract significantly more government resources to our region, especially in relation to transport and delivering net zero by our ambitious 2030 target; we also need to ensure we are using current resources as effectively as possible, for example in tackling the significant pockets of deprivation across the geography of the Combined Authority area.

In terms of climate action, we stressed there must be a strong and sustained focus on retrofitting the region’s properties.

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### **b. General comment - amendments to reports at committee meetings**

We appreciate that sometimes it may be necessary for amendments to committee report recommendations to be moved and discussed at Combined Authority and Joint Committee meetings. We feel strongly, however, that the starting point should be that this is kept to a minimum; in particular, amendments that are submitted at or only just before meetings pose potential difficulties as scrutiny members will not have received any opportunity to scrutinise or even see such amendments in advance.

### **c. Supporting the decarbonisation of aviation (item 9)**

We noted this report and look forward to the more detailed report that will come back in January on developing a joint plan with industry.

We felt that the following factors should be taken into account in developing this work:

- \* Some of the many thousands of jobs currently employed across the aerospace sector may need to adjust / transition into supporting and driving wider carbon reduction initiatives.
- \* Identifying new funding opportunities should be a key part of developing the joint plan with industry, including any match funding opportunities.
- \* The planning / regulatory implications for authorities of new aviation innovations must be considered carefully, for example in relation to electric 'air taxis' or drones that may carry small numbers of passengers operating at relatively low heights.
- \* Given the time it is likely to take realistically to decarbonise aviation, there is perhaps a case for lobbying the government to take incentivisation action through aviation fuel tax measures.
- \* A stronger vision is needed for developing and then delivering hydrogen-based opportunities and solutions.
- \* It will be imperative for the plan with industry to be backed up with key performance indicators so that progress can be tracked effectively.

### **d. Investment Fund (item 10)**

- \* We generally support the proposed update of the Local Growth Assurance Framework, noting that this takes account of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.
- \* We note that it is now proposed to set up a Green Recovery Fund that will leverage £50m on priority projects to tackle the climate emergency. It will be important to robustly track and challenge delivery on this.
- \* We noted that action is being taken to carefully assess the implications for investing in infrastructure linked to the current national issues around the economic supply chain and rising construction / materials / labour costs.
- \* We feel there is merit in Scrutiny and Audit committee members jointly reviewing the outcomes from the recent Gateway Review of the Investment Fund.

### **e. City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (item 11)**

We generally welcomed this report and look forward to the allocation to be confirmed through the government's spending review.

We flagged the following particular issues:

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- \* The ongoing importance of securing a north Bristol Park and Ride, noting the need to take every step we can to increase public transport use given the continued traffic problems in this part of Bristol, not helped by the 'ripple effect' of commuters parking in residential streets since the introduction of residents parking zones in the more inner city areas of Bristol.
  - \* Securing a solution to the Brislington A4 transport corridor that does not involve building a new road on the Brislington railway path.
  - \* Recognising the A38 as a key transport corridor within Bristol.
  - \* Securing a more sustainable transport solution for the M32 and adjacent communities.

#### **f. Bus Service Improvement Plan (item 12)**

We welcomed the latest working draft of the plan.

We raised a number of issues, noting that they will be addressed through the plan and the enhanced partnership. These include:

- \* The need to enhance and upgrade significantly the specific infrastructure around bus stops, including the quality of passenger shelters, waste bins, and real time information for passengers; and mobile phone charging points. There is a case for implementing this on a 'tackling the worst first' basis.
- \* Routing of services – we should look to introduce orbital routes into the network of routes that connect communities to city centres; and also factor in the need to better connect important work locations to bus services, for example Avonmouth.
- \* Delivering an enhanced bus passenger experience through cashless payments and through ticketing.

#### **g. Supported bus services procurement (item 13)**

We welcomed this report. Noting that the issue of procuring a Cribbs Patchway Metrobus Extension will be taken forward, it was suggested that the option of a Metrobus route serving the South Bristol Link should also be considered again.

#### **h. Proposed future leadership structure (item 18)**

We noted the Chief Executive's proposed leadership structure for the Combined Authority.

We note that inevitably it will take time to recruit the right people to take up the permanent senior leadership roles. Given this, we recognise some interim arrangements may be necessary, especially for the Environment Director role given we are in a climate emergency.

**Councillor Winston Duguid**

Chair

West of England Combined Authority Overview & Scrutiny Committee.